THE UNSEEN HOST

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THE UNSEEN HOST

No. 311

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THE UNSEEN HOST

STORIES OF THE GREAT WAR

BY

CHARLES L. WARR

PAISLEY: ALEXANDER GARDNER
Publisher by Appointment to the late Queen Victoria

1917

SEVENTH IMPRESSION

LONDON
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & CO., LMD.

TO

THE IMMORTAL MEMORY

OF

JAMES CLARK,

COMPANION OF THE ORDER OF THE BATH,
LIEUTENANT-COLONEL COMMANDING THE 9TH ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS;

AND OF

KENNETH JAMES CAMPBELL,

BACHELOR OF ARTS OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, OXFORD,
SECOND-LIEUTENANT, 9TH ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS;

WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE AT HOOGE, NEAR YPRES, ON THE 10TH OF MAY, 1915, AND DIED WITH THEIR FACE TO THE ENEMY.

THOUGH SO DISSIMILAR IN YEARS THEY WERE STRANGELY ALIKE: ONE IN SIMPLENESS OF HEART, IN CHILDLIKE FAITH, IN CONSECRATION OF LIFE, IN DEVOTION TO DUTY.

THEY WERE GALLANT SOLDIERS, PERFECT SCOTTISH GENTLEMEN, SAINTS OF GOD.

As for those who perish by sea or land, they have but exchanged the twilight of this poor life for the glorious noontide; it is only by keeping this ever before us that we can retain our sanity.—*Norman Maclean.*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I OWE my thanks to the editors of the *Scotsman*, the *Glasgow Herald*, and other papers for their kindness in allowing me to reprint extracts from articles which have appeared in their columns—these form the greater portion of "The New Gethsemane," "Sed Miles sed pro Patria," and "The Clachan of the West."

C. L. W.

PREFACE

I FEEL that this volume requires a word of explanation, if only in view of the fact that the age in which we live has tended towards the development in many men of a condition of mind which forbids not only a belief in, but even toleration of the idea of the mere possibility of anything which cannot be explained in terms of materialistic experience. To those who cultivate this school of thought I offer but one word of advice—Do not read this book: it will only annoy you. But to those who are still old-fashioned enough to believe that "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy," I give this little volume, knowing that from them it will receive at least sympathy, and from a few, credence.

I do not attempt to explain the occurrences set forth—I cannot explain them, nor can anyone else. I merely asseverate that to the best of my knowledge they are all true, and are in no case the figments of my own imagination.

This volume is not intended as an addition to the flood of controversial literature which has surged around the conception of "The Angelic Host at Mons." I feel that time is indeed too precious to waste in any such vain argument. It is only because I personally hold these stories to be true that they are now given to the public. By "true" I would not for one minute contend that the spiritual can be seen by the eye of flesh—that idea seems to border on the grotesque. It is surely only spirit that could behold spirit, and therefor spiritual appearances, if seen or heard at all, can only be discernible spiritually, by some indefinable sympathy of soul with soul. We all know these strange moments of

revelation—a passing glance in some one's eye, a flitting shadow on a face, revealing sudden unfathomed depths—what might not that become if it were immeasurably intensified?

And so perhaps some of the pages in this book may afford a sense of security to a few who are going forth to take up the sword which has fallen from the hands of others. It may help them to trust in the presence of an "Unseen Host" about their daily path. It may assist those of them to whom the call shall come, to enter, like true British soldiers with level eyes and laughing lips, the valley of the shadow of death.

It is best to keep an open mind on things as to whose source or purpose or existence we cannot even guess. After all, as Dr. Johnson says, this is a question which, after five thousand years, is yet undecided—a question which, whether in theology or philosophy, is one of the most important that can come before the human understanding.

And I so love to think that one day in the Isle of Dreams, far away through the gates of the west, we each and all of us will come to know whatever there is to be known of the eternal mystery which, in its immense and awful silence, surrounds with its darkness our throbbing little lives.

CHARLES L. WARR.

ROSNEATH,
DUNBARTONSHIRE,
February, 1916.

PREFACE TO SIXTH IMPRESSION

I FEEL it is only courteous to acknowledge the gracious reception which has been given to this book by the Press and by the general public, a reception as unexpected as it is undeserved. And especially I wish to thank the many unknown friends in all parts of the land who have been kind enough to write to me saying that these pages have been of comfort to them when sorrow was heavy and life full of despair. Their words have filled me with surprise and thankfulness. It is impossible to express how very much letters of that kind really mean to one; how wonderful is the knowledge that a book which one has written has helped people when help was most required. I am so glad to know it.

The war still drags on, and since these pages were penned multitudes more have passed into the silence beyond. I still believe what I wrote then: I believe it the more firmly because I too, in these last days, have known the empty ache of the heart for "the sound of a voice that is still."

And now that the Holy Season once more draws nigh, it is worth while remembering that the roar of the cannon can never drown the angels' song, that the Star of Bethlehem is not obscured by the mists of tears, that permanent through change and death abides the human soul.

Somewhere among the quiet woodlands of life is the well-spring of indwelling peace. It is not a dream: it is a great reality. It rises ceaselessly from the green diamond at the heart of the world, at the heart of all the worlds. And though one must go there in the dimness of the twilight—for he that seeketh it must guide his way by the stars—yet when the well spring is found there can be no night there. A tree, whose spreading branches are heavy with thick clusters of the blood-red fruit of perpetual life, grows beside its crystal waters; and watching over it everlastingly is the cherubim of God.

And he that seeketh it shall find it, and he that findeth it shall never taste of death, neither any more know the bitterness of tears.

CHARLES L. WARR.

Christmas, 1916.

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THE UNSEEN HOST

THE UNSEEN HOST

As one walks from the Grand Place of Ypres down the Rue de Lille to the old hoary town-gateway and the deep broad moat where the white swans used to revel in the sunlight, there stands about half-way down on the left hand side—or rather stood, for nothing stands now in that once beautiful city—a little tavern, which up to the month of April last was much frequented by the British soldiery. It was a humble enough place—a little room with eight or nine tables and about twice as many chairs. Half a dozen faded prints hung on the walls, cheap muslin curtains were on the windows, and the decoration was completed by two blue china pots, each holding the remains of a dusty plant, long since dead. There was no oil-cloth on the floor, no mats: the girl who made the coffee said they used to have them before the October bombardment, but now—well, it was safer and

more economical to have as few things as possible to be destroyed. And she would pout with her pretty lips and shrug her dainty shoulders.

One Sunday evening, as the sun was setting and the shadows were long in the white dusty streets, I heard in that room a queer story, a story the like of which I had never heard before —past man's understanding. Four of us sat at a table, the only occupants of the room at the time, and the air was thick with our tobacco smoke. The girl behind the bar was cleaning glasses and humming gaily to herself—they sang and laughed in Ypres to the last. Outside, the broad thoroughfare was thronged with soldiers and civilians walking in the evening light. Occasionally the windows would rattle as chance shells exploded in the town.

The man who told the tale was a private soldier, dirty, mud-stained, and unshaven. Yet from his lips fell a wonderful story, just as in strange places one lights on some rare flower. He told it with many an oath and many a blasphemy, as soldiers love to do, but with a fire in his eyes which bespoke a living soul.

And those two friends who sat with me there and listened to him have passed into the clearer light where the secrets of the stars are disclosed and every tangled skein of earth is unravelled to the eye: and I am left alone, to grope in the darkness, to wonder, to hope, and again to wonder; until for me, too, all mists be rolled away. And as I tell this tale as I heard it a great sadness fills my heart—for I feel that I tell it to a world that will believe it not.

It was in the grey of the early morning that a sentry spotted something moving among the long grass beyond the barbed wire. He watched intently for a few minutes but could not be quite certain—the ground mist was heavy and was so deceptive. A few seconds later he again felt convinced that something moved near the same place. He raised his rifle and fired three rounds on the off chance of it being a prowling German. His shot seemed to be the signal for a perfect tornado of yells, and suddenly out of the mist there loomed hosts of phantom-like figures, armed with wire cutters.

In a moment they were on the wire, cutting as for their life—*snip* went strand after strand.

It was all sudden and unexpected, but in a minute the trench garrison lined the parapet, and a murderous fire poured in upon the attacking Germans. There is small chance of life when cutting wire ten yards from the enemy's trench, and the grey figures went down by scores, some hanging on the wire, others piled in heaps of dead and wounded. Yet on they came in dense masses, swarming through the mist like ghosts in the teeth of a sweeping storm of lead. Nothing seemed to be able to stop them, and, though falling by hundreds in doing it, the wire was being cut more and more each minute. And ever on they came, climbing over the heaps of their dead. Soon there would be a bridge of corpses over the entanglements.

The rifles of the defenders grew red-hot in their hands, but they kept up the fire. Through the rattle and din could be heard the shrill voices of the Cockney Tommies vieing with one another as to who should go into the jaws of death with the best joke on his lips.

And the Germans still swarmed over. At the

right flank of the trench they were almost through the wire and would soon be scrambling over the big ditch and up the parapet; a few seconds more and the centre might fall.

"Keep it up, lads, keep it up, for God's sake," yelled the platoon sergeant through the uproar; "when I gives the word, up and at 'em with the bayonet."

With their hands blistered and cut, and their faces filthy with powder and smoke, the dishevelled wild-eyed garrison fired on. . . .

A shrill whistle suddenly sounded, and the Germans turned and retreated into the mist, leaving behind them their dead and wounded, piled in heaps. A hoarse cheer went up from the British trenches. The enemy had retired when victory was almost within their grasp, had they but realised it.

"That was a near thing an' no mistake," said the platoon-sergeant, drawing the back of his hand across his cracked lips. "Gawd! I'm 'ot!" He pushed his cap back off his forehead and, sitting down on an ammunition box, began to pull through the barrel of his rifle.

"All rifles cleaned at once, boys," he shouted

along the trenches. "Come on there, Atkins, lift your carcase off that fire-step—you're not 'ere on a bloomin' pic-nic, are yer?"

The hot smoking rifles were cleaned and polished, ready for immediate use; the corroded barrels were oiled and shining.

"They'll be at us again before long," growled the sergeant, squirting tobacco juice from the corner of his mouth. "The wire's down now, and they've got a bloomin' Piccadilly over their pals' corpses. Double these sentries, Gray."

His corporal walked along the trench and saw the order executed, then returned and sat down by the sergeant.

"Where's the orficer been all the while?" he asked, lighting a cigarette.

"Blow'd if I know—never seen him since the blighters attacked—well, my lad, what is it?"

The officer's orderly approached.

"Mr. Venables wants to speak to you, sergeant," he said; "I can't make out what's gone wrong with him. He slept in his dug-out all through the attack. I shook and shook him

an' 'e wouldn't wake. I yells inter his ear and he wouldn't 'ear me. Then I pours the water out of 'is bottle over 'is face and down 'is neck —and damn'd if he'd open 'is bloomin' eyes. I thought 'e was dead but for 'is breathin' . . . Never see'd anythin'——"

"Arnott!" shouted a voice from the officer's dug-out.

"There 'e is, sergeant, hollerin' for yer . . . better look slippy."

Sergeant Arnott scrambled along to the dug-out and crawled inside. The subaltern in charge of the trench sat on a biscuit box, his head in his hands. He sat in silence for a while, then looked up—his eyes were very bright and shining.

"When did that attack begin, Arnott?"

"About ten minutes after you had been round the trench, sir—it came on sudden-like."

"And how long did it last?"

"About 'arf an hour, sir. I thought the blighters were in on us—they would 'ave bin, too, if they'd only 'ad the sense to keep on. They'll be at us again soon, sir—the wire's mostly all cut."

The subaltern passed a hand wearily across his brow.

"It's so funny, Arnott, but I must have been asleep all the time they were attacking "——

"You was, sir," interposed the sergeant gravely, "sleepin' like a top. . . . Meredith 'e couldn't waken you, 'e says, although 'e poured the water from your water-bottle down your neck."

The subaltern smiled faintly.

"Yes? . . . But I had a strange dream . . . can't remember much of it, . . . but a shining figure seemed to speak to me and to tell me we were going to be in for a deuced hot time of it—you see, Arnott, this part is the key to the British position "——

The sergeant nodded.

"But he said we were to stick it out no matter what happened and he would help us—and then he went away . . . I remember he had a sword in his hand—it looked like fire. He was awfully like a big fellow on the reredos in the church at home—an angel—Michael, I think they call him. But it was all rather strange,

Arnott, wasn't it?" he added, smiling, and lit a cigarette.

"It was that, sir."

"Well, come round the trench with me and see that these fellows are all ready if they do attack us."

The words had scarcely left his lips when there was a wild shout from the sentries, and the rattle of rapid fire broke out. The officer and his sergeant raised their heads above the parapet. It was clear enough now to see the German lines, and the sight they saw was that which, when seen for the first time, brings a curious momentary flutter to even the stoutest heart—the German hordes attacking in close formation. They were already half over the no-man's-land between the two trenches, falling, falling, row after row, but still coming on. Over the British trench shrieked the shrapnel, and glancing backwards, the officer saw it bursting over the support trenches, and the intervening waste being smashed with high explosives. Few, if any, supports would get up through that awful inferno. The reserves of

grey troops seemed endless—would they never stop pouring over the distant parapets?

Step by step they gained ground, despite the steadiness and accuracy of our fire; little by little the ranks came nearer, mown down like grain, but always immediately replaced. On either side the British trenches poured in their enfilade fire, then ceased—it was getting too risky, as they might damage their own men.

"Keep that —— machine-gun goin', men," yelled Sergeant Arnott, perspiration running in streams down his fiery face, "keep it goin'! . . . . what the 'ell are you waitin' for?"

"Machine gun's jammed!" came back the grim reply.

"God in 'eavin'!" muttered the sergeant, "our ticket's in" . . . and seizing a rifle he commenced blazing away.

"'Ow's that for Bisley?" shouted a Tommy, as a bearded German fell fifteen yards from the parapet.

"First bull you ever made, sonny," jeered his neighbour; "'oly Moses, but they're gettin' close."

The little band prepared to face the end.

" ' *We all go the same way 'ome'* " blithely sang a young private, jamming his magazine full.

For five minutes they fired desperately.

" Bill! wot the 'ell's that?" yelled someone.

" Wot the 'ell's wot?"

The two men filled their magazines like lightning, and shouted as they fired:

" That there trampin'—I can 'ear it above the bloomin' row—there you are, at our back! like a bloomin' army."

Bill glanced hurriedly over the waste ground between the firing line and supports.

" There's no bloomin' army there," he said, grimly; " wish to Gawd there was."

But in a moment he heard it—so did the others—the sound as of a great host advancing in their rear. Glances were cast over their shoulders, but the fire never slackened. There was no one there, and the Germans drew nearer.

Tramp, tramp, tramp. . . .

It sounded on their ears through the roar of the shells and the rattle of the musketry, like

the marching of ten thousand men, steady, rythmical, coming nearer, nearer. . . .

Tramp, tramp . . . like the surge of a great sea . . . and the clatter of hoofs, loud and fierce, the clatter of squadrons of horsemen . .

Tramp, tramp . . . the unseen host drew closer, closer . . . over the British trench swept something like the rush of a mighty wind, whirling them from their feet on to the ground.

The Germans who had reached the parapet stood as if turned to stone. One man had time to fire his bullet at the subaltern . . . then the grey battalions turned and fled. . . .

Tramp, tramp, tramp—and onward swept the unseen host. . . .

"O, thank God! there he is," cried the subaltern, shot in the head, ere he fell back, "there he is—how like he is to the fellow on the reredos in the church at home—at home——"

As he fell back he pointed beyond their parapet, and those near him who heard him and followed his finger saw a great light, a radiant figure, something that flashed like a sword of flame—only for a moment—then

nothing but the retreating Germans, rushing for the cover of their trenches.

. . . . . .

"I 'ope I 'aven't tired you with my story, sirs," said the private when he finished, "but as you was good enough to speak to me, I thought you would like to 'ear it . . . good-night, sirs."

He saluted and went out.

That man, snatched in some mysterious way from the mouth of death, believed that on his side that day had fought Gabriel the captain of the hosts of heaven, Michael the archangel, and all angels, with the powers and principalities of light—had fought for him, and did smite and win the victory. . . .

And I believe it too.

EILIDH DHUBH

EILIDH DHUBH

FAR away in Scotland north, by the shores of the western sea, there slumbers a lonely bay beneath the shadows of the circling mountains, where the waves evermore caress the white pebbles of a silver strand. The entrance is guarded by high columnar rocks merging on the north side into the great cliffs which stretch along the coast-line to Banavil, seven miles away. Hard by the old wooden jetty, rotten and mouldering, a few thatched houses form themselves into a straggling, ill-kempt street facing towards the mouth of the bay and the setting sun. At the south-end of the clachan stands the parish Kirk among the graves. Near it, embowered in trees, is the manse. At the north end of the street is situated the Roman Catholic chapel, a large white building of crude architecture devoid of ornamentation.

A little to the right of the parish Kirk are the sorrowful ruins of the larger village of the long gone days when the land was well-peopled

with the sons and daughters of the old race. The walls alone remain, broken and lichen-covered, stained and battered with the tempests of years. Ivy climbs about them in wild profusion, ferns and young saplings grow in the crevices, the rats find safe nests in the crumbling foundations. To-day the remnant of the population in the tumble-down huts by the shore prolong for a little while the death-bed agony of a dying race.

All around rise the everlasting hills, rolling up grandly in verdant slopes and stretches of pine forest, till the crags and bog of the mountain heights are reached, whence the black towering peaks leap to meet the sky.

It was in the cool, restful peace of an August evening that I heard from the lips of Lachlan MacRae, the Catholic priest, the strange story of Eilidh Dhubh; and so far as I can remember it I will tell it to you as he told it to me. But when I heard it the fragrance of the summer night pervaded the old garden, and down by the water the peat fires of the little clachan sent up their smoke in spirals, blue and peaceful. Around the purpling peaks the elusive mist

clung softly, blushing in the radiance of the waning day. Overhead the wild free birds of ocean wheeled unceasingly, uttering their shrill plaintive cries ere they winged away to rest. From the shielings there floated to our ears the weird songs of the fisherfolk as they sat by their doors mending their nets in the glow of the eventide. They were the old songs of the old race, throbbing with all the infinite pathos of the Highland hills. Evening by evening they sit there in the summer twilight, and the ancient tales are told with kindling eye, while the blood surges hot and the heart beats fast as the stories of the brave days of old go the round in the soft emotional tongue of the Celtic race. This unfrequented island of the west, where the ancient faith still holds sway and keeps alight the torch of quaint tradition and lovely legend, is one of the few places where still the old songs of love can be heard at the sun-down. For the Highland people sing no more when the west is aglow. The songs are dead among the hills—the great world has silenced them.

We sat in an old-world arbour, smothered

in honeysuckle. Before us stretched the vast never-resting sea. The latest beams of the blood-red sun fell upon it like shafts of glory, while the soft, almost imperceptible, wind came sighing from the west. And the white-haired priest sucked his pipe into glowing life, and told me his story.

(1.)

Through the hours of the grey winter day with anxious eyes the women had watched the far horizon. They had seen the first cloud rise out of the dim distance and slowly climb the heavens, to be followed by another and another till the whole of the north-eastern sky was one great bank of nebulous darkness. Higher and higher they mounted, casting a chill dark shadow over the sea. A wind arose, and, moaning, bore them on its wings. Over the sky they raced and scudded, huge rolling masses, blue, dark-grey, black, whirling and swirling, writhing and surging, till a vast sullen pall hung across the vault of heaven.

The wind began to wield its flail upon the sea, white crests appeared, and the low wail of

the rising storm came sweeping out of the waste of waters. Fiercer and fiercer grew the blasts, lashing the turgid waves to fury. Louder swelled the shrieking of the elements. All at once the clouds seemed to burst, the rain descending in torrents, to be caught in the grip of the howling wind. Night fell. The dim glow from the small shieling windows only intensified the darkness. From the rain-drenched panes the watching women peered into the opaque gloom. With hearts sick with fear they listened by the hearths which never grow cold; the only sound was the roar of the foam-crested squadrons of the deep as they hurled themselves upon the high basaltic cliffs. And on every lip trembled the unspoken prayer, "O God! save the fleet!"

It is these fisherfolk of the North who can tell you of the tragedies of life; and widows whose husbands the cruel sea holds will speak of the day when they lost their first-born in the teeth of the storm, and of the day when his brother, like his fathers before him, went down to the sea never to return. With eyes too sad to weep they will listen to the yelling of the

tempest, and through the long dark night will pray for the lad far away on the heaving waters, the last one left, lest he, too, should be claimed by the hungry wave. They know the sea is salt with tears. These are the women who sit by the peats and dream of Tir-na-h'Oige, the Isle of Eternal Youth, which lies beyond the sea, where the lost ones are restored and the weary old world grows young again in everlasting spring. They know the hidden meaning of the things that are not seen, and to their loneliness the wind forever brings a message across the waters, of a life which nothing can quench.

Late that night, by ancient custom, everyone gathered in the house of old Janet Macleod, the mother of the clachan. Hour after hour they crouched round the red peats, and, to while away the time, old Seoras, son of Seumas, told a legend of Clan Gillean. In the murky gloom the glow from the fire cast strange fantastic shadows on the wall, and lit the faces of the watchers with a weird light. The smoke-grimed rafters above them supported old Janet's hens, fast asleep. On the dresser a

cheap clock ticked monotonously with a loud rasping noise. . . .

Suddenly, during a lull in the storm, the clatter of hoofs was heard. Seoras, son of Seumas, walked to the door and opened it—a swirl of rain swept in as a man staggered into the room, drenched to the skin, and covered with mud. It was Angus Don from Banavil.

"A boat on Eilan-na-Roan," he gasped: "a body has been washed ashore already."

A low moan of distress came from the pallid lips of the circle round the fire; every face was blanched white with apprehension.

"*Dhé!* what boat d'ye think it is, Angus Don?" asked Seoras, son of Seumas.

"*An Uiseag,*" responded the horseman, wearily. "And it is Iain Mor's body that we have got. Thank God there are none depending on him."

"Iain Mor?" cried Eilidh Dhubh, springing up from the ground where she had been sitting beside old Janet; "did you say Iain Mor? It was his boat my Duncan was aboard of. *O Dhia!* my laddie, my laddie! Is he to get well from his wounds only to die?"

She made a rush for the door, but Angus Don intercepted her, and she sank on the earthen floor sobbing as if her heart would break. She was betrothed to Duncan Ban, son of Donald, a brave man, and a true. Early in the autumn of 1914 he had returned from Flanders, wounded and broken. For long he lay in hospital at the point of death, then slowly began to grow strong again. And month after month Eilidh had waited until he was well, and only a week before had he set out at last for his far-off home, and that day had sailed from Portree in a fishing-smack to save time. They were to have been married on his return.

"I must go to him, I must go to him," she moaned, burying her face in her hands. "O Angus, take me there for the love of the Blessed Virgin!" She fell on her knees before him.

"All right, *mo chagair,*" said Janet, soothingly, "calm yourself. Maybe Duncan will be safe and sound. Dry your tears, my girl, and we'll fetch the priest's gig. Angus has gone for it, and he'll be back soon; so don't cry."

Nothing would quieten the hysterical girl till Angus Don returned with the gig and the

Reverend Lachlan; and together, with Eilidh and Seoras, son of Seumas, they set out on their seven mile drive in the teeth of the gale.

Like the roar of massed artillery the dark peaks suddenly echoed to the crash of thunder. The heavens glowed white with the brilliance of the lightning. Every moment the storm increased in strength. The wind shrieked like all the demons of hell let loose, and the rain swept in driving sheets from the sea. Flashes of forked lightning were followed by terrible detonations. The four people in the gig crouched close to each other, cold and shivering. Frenzied with terror, the horse took the bit in its teeth, and tore forward into the darkness. Banavil was reached at last, and, scrambling from the cart, which they left at Angus Don's steading, they made their way to the sheltered zig-zag path which leads down the cliffs to the shore beneath.

On the beach, in the shadow of the black precipice, a little group stood with some lanterns, men and women staring through the spindrift out to sea. Huge rolling masses of water came surging through the night. In a

few minutes a flash swept the heavens, and by the glare the new-comers saw, three hundred yards distant, the black shape of a dismantled fishing-smack stove high upon the jagged tail of Eilan-na-Roan.

"There they are, there they are," yelled a gnarled old man, pointing excitedly out into the waste of heaving water; and almost immediately another flash revealed a mast rising on the crest of a wave within fifty yards of the shore. Some men were clinging to it. In tense silence the watchers waited. Minutes passed and they saw nothing. But the fires again swept over the sky, and with a hoarse cry the men rushed forward into the surf, seized the mast of the wrecked boat, and dragged it to the shore. Two fishermen were lashed to it—one was dead, the other still breathed. But neither was Duncan, son of Donald.

(2.)

When the storm abated the cliff base was searched. How often that shore has been searched with the same gruesome object! No

sign of the missing member of the crew could be found. For a week the search continued, meeting with no success, and all that time Eilidh Dhubh was as one bereft of hope in all things human or divine. She would speak to no one. Her eyes shone with a strange light. And never did she shed a tear. But night and day she sat by the fire, gazing into the red embers, stunned and dazed. With the greatest difficulty they persuaded her to eat even enough to keep body and soul together.

On the evening of the ninth day from the night of the wreck—it was Sunday—Lachlan MacRae was smoking his pipe in the book-littered study of his parsonage. A green-shaded lamp cast a restful shadow over the comfortable room. Deep in an arm-chair reclined the priest, the labours of the day ended. A knock at the door roused him from his reverie. In a few moments the door opened, and into the sanctum was ushered Seoras, son of Seumas, nervously apologetic.

"Well, Seoras," began MacRae, "what brings you here at this time of the night? Nothing wrong, I hope?"

Seoras, son of Seumas, stared intently at his boots, awkwardly shifted his rabbitskin cap from one hand to the other, advanced two steps and spat into the peats. . . . He then appeared more at ease.

"There is something gone wrong with Eilidh Dhubh," he said at length, "and we were wondering if you would come to talk with her—though it's very sorry we are to disturb your reverence on the Holy Day. But this will be a work of mercy, for sure," he added in extenuation.

"Sit down, man," replied the Reverend Lachlan. "What's the matter with her?"

Seoras, son of Seumas, seated himself gingerly upon the edge of a chair near the door, at a respectful distance from the man of God, and carefully balanced his cap between his knees.

"She seems to be possessed of a devil," he said, stolidly. "It will be well if you can come to her soon."

Perplexed and uneasy, the priest donned his coat and hat, and set out with the old fisherman through the starlit night. The great ocean lay

sleeping in the pale moonlight, sad and strange. The dark mysterious hills, ethereal, phantom-like, seemed to encircle the little clachan with everlasting arms. The stillness of the Sabbath night brooded over the world.

When they reached the hut of Eilidh's mother, they lifted the latch and entered. A number of women sat round the fire, and in the midst of them was the stricken girl, crooning a weird dirge. Her black dishevelled hair fell down over her shoulders. Her hands were clasped; her face was pale as death; and in her eyes there gleamed the terrible light of madness.

They made way for the priest, and he sat down beside her, trying to soothe her with words of comfort. She paid no attention; it was as if she were deaf. All at once she stopped her song. Rising abruptly from her stool, she burst into a loud wailing. In a wild delirium she beat her breast and tore her hair. The neighbours shuddered. No words of the priest could quieten the demented creature. . . Suddenly she ceased from weeping. With up-raised finger, she stood as if listening for a

distant noise, her face strained with expectancy. A silence held the little group.

"Hush! don't you hear it? Don't you hear it, your reverence?" she asked in a whisper, trembling with excitement.

"What, *mo leannain?*" asked the old man, stroking her hair with a loving tenderness, "what is there to hear?"

"Why, the knocking at the window. Hark! there it is again! Three knocks, three knocks! O God, what is it wanting? . . . One, two, three—there it is again! Three knocks! . . . Hush, listen! . . ."

To the listeners there was no sound audible save the beating of their own hearts. A long silence ensued. Outside a sea-gull wailed like a child in agony.

Eilidh tiptoed to the tiny window set in the wall, and stood there rigid with suppressed excitement. The awestruck group round the fire watched her movements with eyes starting from their sockets. Even the priest was possessed of a strange uneasiness.

The stillness was broken by Black Eilidh

beginning to talk rapidly, as if to someone outside the window.

"Duncan, *mo chagair,* is it you indeed? . . Yes, I will come to you, *mo ghaol,* and you will show me the road to where you be, Duncan. . . Ah! and we will fly away together, my man, and there will be no more tears where we are going, and no more storms, Duncan, but sunshine and flowers and birds singing forever in the sweet green trees! O Duncan, Duncan Ban, call for me soon."

A few minutes elapsed; she returned and sat down by the fire again. A change had come over her. Her face seemed suffused with a radiance as if she had seen a vision. Soft and low she began to sing a plaintive threnody. Like the rythmic chords of a harp, her voice rose and fell, now vibrating with passion, now steeped in tears.

She stopped—she rushed to the window.

"Is it the night?" she cried.

And while the listeners did not hear a human voice, each one in that room was strangely conscious of an answering presence pervading

the atmosphere; and they felt, rather than heard, the answer.

"It is the night, it is the night!"

"O, is it the night?" cried Eilidh, her voice rising in a scream.

And the answering presence replied:

"It is the night!"

She returned to the fire. Too terrified to move or speak, the women, each huddled in her *breacan,* stared at her as if she were a ghost. The priest passed a shaking hand across his forehead—it was wet as from the sea. He put his arm round the shoulders of the mad girl, and spoke gently to her in the old tongue, trying to soothe her. She took no notice of him; gazing into the peats, she recommenced the mysterious dirge, swaying her body to and fro in time with the music.

And as before, she stopped abruptly and went to the window.

"Is it the night?" she whispered.

Again the answering presence oppressed the listeners with a queer spell, and back came the words, trembling on the air,

"It is the night! Come, Eilidh Dhubh, it is the night!"

Before anyone could restrain her, Eilidh sprang to the door and flung it open.

"They could not find your corpse, Duncan," she yelled, "but I am coming to you, *I* am coming!"

And with a peal of demoniacal laughter, she fled into the jaws of the night.

Lachlan MacRae made a dash for the door, only to recoil back among the shrinking women as across the threshold walked slowly a small grey mare. The beast stood shivering like an aspen leaf, its eyes full of terror.

"Merciful God!" gasped the priest, "it's Duncan Ban's old grey mare!"

(3.)

All through the long hours of the night they searched the clachan and the neighbourhood, but there was no sign of the missing girl. She had completely disappeared. Dawn broke over the eastern hills, gilding their summits with the rosy light of the new-born day. Pale and wearied, the seekers returned to the clachan.

Among the last was the priest. And as he reached his gate a strange thing happened. Duncan Ban's old grey mare came trotting down the road. She passed him, whisking her tail, and when ten yards or so away stopped dead and looked back whinnying in a curious way. A few seconds later she again started forward, only to stop after a few yards and repeat her extraordinary behaviour. At that minute, Iain, son of Alasdair, and Duncan Og, the keeper, appeared, climbing up the rocks from the shore. MacRae hailed them, and the three men together watched the movements of the grey mare. The priest was the first to break silence.

"I'm not given to being superstitious as a rule," he said, "but—well, I'm just going to follow that beast. Who's coming?"

Duncan Og and Iain, son of Alasdair, had had enough of spooks and terrors in that weird search over the silent wastes during the night which had just passed, but no good would come of letting the man of God run into risks by himself; moreover, it was broad daylight, and that served to fortify their flagging zeal. They all went.

As soon as they moved towards her, the mare began to trot on her way. Back along the cliff road proceeded the strange group. Mile after mile was traversed, and the men began to grow weary. Suddenly the mare turned aside, off the moorland road, and made for the cliffs. They struggled after her, wading knee-deep through the heather. Right to the edge she trotted, and then she halted. The three men stood still and watched her with amazement. Throwing up her head, she smelled the wind. For a brief space she stood still, immovable as a statue, then, uttering a loud cry, she walked slowly and deliberately over the precipice.

When they reached the base of the cliffs they came upon a sight which made their flesh creep with wonder and awe. In an alcove in the rocks which had escaped the eyes of those who had searched for the corpse of the missing soldier lay two dead bodies, side by side, stretched on a strip of snow-white beach. There was nothing revolting about the spectacle —they lay so close and peaceful that it seemed as if they had just laid them down to sleep.

They were Duncan Ban, son of Donald, and Eilidh Dhubh of his love. Within two yards of them lay the carcase of the old grey mare.

And thus Duncan Ban came home from the war.

. . . . . .

Lachlan MacRae ceased his tale. In silence we sat gazing out into the offing. The sun had gone down, and its latest beams shone like a far-off glory behind the dark serrated peaks of the western mountains. A chill was creeping over the air. Down by the sea the songs of the fisherfolk had ceased. The night came stealing on slowly, mysteriously, heralded by the lengthening shadows and the strange silence of the dying day. Lights gleamed in the huts by the shore, and through the violet dusk the stars began to twinkle.

"It was a strange business," muttered the old man, half to himself, as he knocked the ashes from his pipe, "a strange, strange business."

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

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(I.)

IT was Spring: the season of sunlight and sweet showers, the bright joyous months of peeping snowdrop, crocus, and golden daffodil, rich cherry blossom, drooping lilac, white hawthorn, little violets and opening tulips—and a great dead world bursting forth in resurrection music. Over the hills and valleys was cast a glowing sheen, buds on the trees, and the voice of gladness in the clear cold winds.

And there is no fairer spot on earth than the tiny clachan of Glenfeulan, with its old grey church by the bend in the river, its walls clad in the peace robes of moss and lichen, walls whose beauty withstood fire, sword, and restorer for nearly twice three hundred years. There are no fairer hills and no fairer woods than the

hills and woods of Glenfeulan; and no river sings a sweeter song.

On a certain bright April day, the fresh world was full of the melodies of new-born life. The great mountains, all green and blue and fawn, lay soft with the glow of the sunlight. A fresh wind blew, sharp with the invigorating freshness of the early year. Down near the river some cattle were browsing: among budding trees the birds trilled merrily . . . it was very peaceful . . . in the tower the church clock slowly chimed the hour of noon.

Through the wicket gate leading from the manse shrubberies into the churchyard came two little boys. Backward glances and whispered words shewed them bent on no lawful errand. Fine children they were—clear-eyed, open-faced, fresh, and healthy. The taller and elder of the two was the possessor of strikingly fair hair which fell on his shoulders in clouds and earned for him among the villagers the name of Calum Ban. The smaller boy was short, rather dark and thickset, with a pair of mischievous twinkling eyes, and round rosy cheeks—Iain they called him, Iain

Og. And these twain were at once the pride and heart-break of James Mackenzie, minister of Glenfeulan.

It was an ideal day for bird-nesting, and that was manifestly what the pair were after. A careful reconnaissance of the churchyard was made and the coast found clear. Returning to the gate, with some exertion they extracted from its concealment in the thicket a light ladder; a cardboard box filled with cotton wool was also produced, and the children proceeded with their burden round the church—a journey without incident save for the smashing of two glass mourning-wreathes. The main doorway, built out from the south wall, was obviously their destination, for across a stained-glass window the ladder was set against the wall of the porch. On the ground was deposited the cardboard box.

The brothers surveyed the frescoed apex of the window with sharp and practised eyes.

"That's it," said Calum, pointing with a grimy forefinger at a tiny nest cunningly concealed in the stonework of the window. "Can you see it? . . . here, look along my finger."

"Yes, I see it," answered Iain, quietly placing his foot on the bottom rung of the ladder. "Hold the ladder, Calum; I'll bring you the eggs down."

"No, you won't," objected the elder; "it's not fair, Iain: it's my nest, for I told you about it. I saw it first and I'm going up first."

"I don't care," protested his brother; "I carried the cardboard box as well as my end of the ladder, so I should get first try."

"You won't."

"I will."

"You won't, Iain. It's my nest."

"It isn't, it's mine. I'm going up first . . . let go my coat."

"No, you're not, Iain," shouted the elder boy, holding fast to his brother's jacket as the short Iain slowly pulled his own solid weight up the ladder, coupled with that of his resentful and tenacious brother.

Iain paused in the ascent, breathless. Further progress was impossible, and the situation demanded prompt and decisive action. Loosening one hand, he pulled off his little blue cap, and with a dexterous backward move-

ment smote his brother on the eye. The strategy was eminently successful—the enemy was dislodged, and slithered to the ground. . . Iain clambered to the top and inserted his chubby hand into the nest.

A moment's investigation of the egg sufficed.

"It's a blue-bonnet's," he shouted down to his brother; "four eggs . . . no, five. I'll bring them all down."

Roused to righteous fury, Calum seized the foot of the ladder.

"No, you wont, Iain, you sneak," he wailed. "I want to go up and get some myself."

And tears were very near!

"I'll bring them down for you, Calum. That'll do as well," came the exasperating reply.

"It won't," shrieked Calum; "you're a sneak, that's what you are, a dirty sneak . . . and I'll never speak to you again."

And Calum in his misery retired inside the porch. . . . Through the deep colours of the window he could see the dim outline of the ladder and his brother's descending form. It was on that and not on the rich representation

of S. John the Baptist preaching his message by a rush-grown river bank that Calum's gaze was riveted. . . . He could stand it no longer, and, rushing from the porch, he seized the foot of the ladder, and shook it violently. By dramatically pointing with one hand to his bulging cheeks, Iain conveyed that the eggs were reposing for safety in his mouth. The dumb appeal was vain, and the little boy was much too high up the ladder to jump. . . . He gave a choking gasp as the eggs burst in his mouth. The ladder continued rocking, and his demoralisation was complete.

"Calum, don't!" he spluttered, clinging for dear life. "O, don't, Calum . . . if I fall I'll smash the window!"

The wail of fear that followed might have melted any heart but that of his outraged brother. And a few moments later, as he accidently came round the corner of the church, the horrified eyes of James Mackenzie were conscious of the confused vision of a tear-stained dishevelled boy rocking furiously the foot of the ladder, of a round falling body and

a little foot that shot like a battering-ram right through the rubicund face of John the Baptist.

On his ears there fell a cry of anguish as Iain's chubby person bumped on the grass . . . and the tinkle and smash of broken glass!

. . . . . .

"Yes, dears, father has forgiven you. Now kneel down like good boys and say your prayers."

And two little white-robed children cuddled in to their mother's knee, rejoicing in their forgiveness. O these days of our childhood! Our days of scrapes and mischief and waywardness; days of innocent misdeeds and severe parental displeasure! And O the sweetness of forgiveness at nightfall, when no deed of the day was too black to prevent a father's smile and a mother's kiss ere the little tired one fell asleep. We have wandered far since these days. Heaven seemed so near us then—and now it sometimes seems so far away. We have wandered far since then and have grown very wise, but our feet are getting weary. O these days that come not again!

"Now, dears, close your eyes, and say it together."

"'Our Father,'" began Calum in a hoarse whisper, "... mummy, I'm not going to say it alone. Iain isn't saying it."

"Yes, yes, darling, Iain will say it too. Now, dearest," said the mother, laying her hands on the little bowed heads.

"'Our Father which art in heaven ...'" began the two childish voices.

"Mum ... Calum's got his eyes open," interposed the younger brother, looking up.

"How could you have seen unless you had yours open too ... yah!"

"Children, children: remember you are saying your prayers. Come now, darlings, to please mother."

And nestling in her loving arms, these two innocents sent up their prayer unto the throne of their Father in Heaven—unto Him who loved the little children and who took them in His arms and blessed them, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.

. . . . . .

"Are you coming in beside me, Iain Og?"

It was dark and the two brothers were alone in their cots.

Iain scrambled from his blankets and crawled into his brother's bed. It was a nightly habit this, and, the quarrels of the day settled, each night saw them fall asleep in each other's arms.

The elder boy put his arm about his brother's neck.

"I'm sorry I shook the ladder, Iain—d'you forgive me?"

"Yes, o'course I forgive you. An' I'm sorry I climbed first to your nest, Calum. . . . Say 'I forgive you.'"

"I forgive you. . . . I'm sorry we quarrelled."

They cuddled close to each other. Iain pillowed his head on his brother's breast. Soon the regular breathing told that the little voyagers were setting out on the ocean of dreams. Drowsily Calum spoke:

"Are you sleeping, Iain?"

"No," came the grunted response.

"Goodnight, Iain—we'll start afresh in the morning."

"Goodnight, Calum."

And they fell asleep.

(2.)

Sprawling in an arm-chair in the low-ceiled book-littered library of Glenfeulan Manse, Malcolm Mackenzie, Advocate at the Scottish Bar, listened to his brother's boyish voice as he blushingly told his story. It was the old old story, old yet ever fresh, the story of a youth and a maiden.

"And that's all about it, Calum," continued the younger man, throwing his cigarette-end revengefully into the grate. "I know I haven't got a cent to my name—nor am I likely to have for a good long time at that—but I love her—and I feel I must tell her so."

The perturbed one lit another cigarette . . . watching the match as it slowly burned in his fingers. The man of law sucked meditatively at his pipe . . . crossed and recrossed his legs.

A strange feeling of envy ran like a stream of poison through him as he listened to his brother's confession. He tried to throw it off —what was that girl to him? He did not love her; she had never been more to him than a friend—the friend of his childhood, his youth, his manhood. He liked her, certainly: everybody did. But there was nothing in that. He cursed himself for a stupid ass, stretched his long legs, and rose lazily to his feet. It was a dreary morning, and the rain swept in gusts against the dripping windows. Malcolm Mackenzie lounged across the room and flattened his nose against the running panes. The view of the glen was not inspiriting. The hollow lay like a sea of mist, the leafy woods stood soaked and dreary in the steady downpour. Only the lower slopes of the hills were visible; the peaks were lost in the leaden clouds. The young lawyer gazed indolently on the gloomy scene, familiar with the years. The long glen with the great opening at the west disclosed nothing to-day but vistas of mist, bog, and driving rain. From the Black Wood peeped the turrets of Dunranald, where lived the laird and his only

child, Rona Maclaine. As he looked, his brother's voice again broke the silence.

"I love her, Calum . . . what should I do?"

And once more that strong feeling of jealousy surged through him. He saw as in a mist before him a picture of that lovely girl at Dunranald, the glory of her golden hair, her perfectly moulded features, her great eyes, the shapely head set so proudly on the snowy neck —and he seemed to realise for the first time that this girl whom he had always looked upon as a child was indeed a very beautiful woman. Bless his soul, she must be twenty-one now! How time did fly! Well, Iain was a lucky beggar if she would have him. . . He vaguely wondered why he had never fallen in love with her himself. Probably because he had always been away so much in Edinburgh, engrossed in his reading. Iain had certainly been more at home owing to his Sandhurst vacations, while he had only snatched odd weeks away from the legal grindstone since his second year at college. . . . How dreary the glen looked. He wondered how a girl like Rona Maclaine

could waste her youth in a place like this, never leaving it even for a season. He pictured her in her radiant loveliness the beauty of the ball-rooms of the Capital. . . . What a wife she would make. . . . She certainly was very beautiful: so different, now he came to think of it, with her fresh colour and clear eyes, from the pleasure-jaded beauties of the Edinburgh west-end squares.

"What should I do, Calum?" persisted his brother. "Should I tell her? You know that father can only give me £100 a year in addition to my pay. . . . Have I any right to tell her in these circumstances? I don't know what I should do."

Again that sting of envy. . . . Malcolm Mackenzie yawned and stretched himself.

"What you want to do, old man," he said with a forced laugh, "is to come for a good tramp in the rain, and let the wind blow your head clear. Come on. We're dining at Dunranald to-night, remember. You don't want to go up there looking like a love-sick swain. Come on, old chap, we'll have a tramp."

"Yes, that's all very well, Calum." Iain

remained by the fire. "But I want some advice on this business. I want to know what you think, old man. . . . You're my brother, and you'll advise me for my good: I know that. Tell me what you think, like a good sort . . . then we'll go for a tramp."

The young advocate turned from the door, and walked again to the window. . . . Once more his eyes rested on the Dunranald towers and the vision of the girl again flashed before his mind . . . and always that sting of envy. For five minutes he stared into vacancy, then turned to his brother.

"My advice to you, Iain," he said slowly, "is to leave the matter alone till you can get a decent position to marry. In a year or two you will get your captaincy . . . wait till then; she's only twenty-one. Besides, I don't think you've any right to speak to her just now."

"You don't?"

"I don't. Leave it for a year or so . . . there is no hurry."

"Yes," said his brother, with a nervous laugh, "but I'm so afraid of . . well, er . . someone else turning up!"

"Who's to turn up in Glenfeulan, I'd like to know," returned his brother, as they both left the room.

. . . . . .

Late that night Rona Maclaine stood before a long mirror in her bedroom in the great tower of Dunranald, as she brushed her flowing hair. She stopped suddenly, laid down her brush, and looked long and hard at her reflection in the looking-glass. The gleams of the candles in their long silver holders touched her face and hair with an almost unearthly beauty. She sighed . . . walked across the great room to the shadows near the bed, and pulled out a drawer in a little escritoire. Returning to the light of the dressing-table, she looked long and steadfastly at a photograph she held in her hand. From the cardboard looked the face of a young officer in Highland uniform—strong, resolute, handsome. Across the likeness was scrolled in a boyish hand—

"TO RONA FROM IAIN."

The girl's eyes grew soft as she gazed on the young face; a strange yearning came into her rather empty heart. For a moment a wild impulse seized her—she lifted the photograph to her lips and passionately kissed it . . . kissed it again and again. But she was herself immediately. She swiftly crossed the room, and locked the photograph away.

"Poor old Iain," she said to herself, "How I wish it might be . . . but I couldn't, O God, I couldn't. I've had enough of poverty. I want to *live*. . . . In any case, he mayn't love me at all—he's never told me."

And a mile away, in Glenfeulan Manse, a simple-hearted boy knelt at his bedside and poured out his troubles into the all-listening Ear.

(3.)

It was August, and it was evening. The hot summer twilight was fading into darkness, and in the distant horizon a great orange moon was slowly climbing up the heavens. Along the

river bank a young man walked quickly as one with a purpose in view. He kept steadily on over the river at the bridge, up past the great lodge gates of Dunranald, along the leafy lane by the stables, and down into the corrie at the little loch behind the mansion house, wherein stands the ruined chapel where sleep forgotten generations of Maclaines. The young man scrambled down a mossy bank and, keeping beneath the shadow of the trees, made for the chapel door. He stepped quietly inside the ruined walls and peered around. There was no one there. He swore softly, and sat down on an old gravestone.

It was a night of unparalleled beauty. Out of a bank of heat haze the orange moon, now changed to silver, rose robed in loveliness into a starry dome. Over the ground there brooded a white low-lying mist. A curlew sailed drearily across the marshes. The broken walls of the ancient chapel loomed pale and eerie in the yellow light. . . The moonbeams glinted and gleamed on the mirror-like surface of the miniature loch, long glittering ribbons of silver. It was deathly still . . . a rat scurried across

the gravestones. The young man shivered, and looked apprehensively over his shoulder. He was not superstitious, but it was distinctly weird there in the darkness, alone with the sleeping Maclaines. He lit a cigarette, puffed it for a few minutes, and suddenly threw it away. A figure was coming towards the chapel, a slim girlish figure, moving peacefully like a shadow, a thin silk scarf thrown over her head and bare shoulders, her soft dinner-dress gleaming in the moonlight.

"Rona!"

"Calum!"

"So you've come. I was so afraid you wouldn't."

"Why shouldn't I?" was the somewhat pert reply.

The young man looked foolish, and an awkward silence ensued. The girl was the first to break it.

"What did you ask me to meet you for, Calum? Do tell me quickly. It's so cold here." She shivered prettily. "Besides, father will wonder where I am."

Malcolm Mackenzie nerved himself for the

effort; when he spoke, his voice was quite calm.

"I asked you to come, Rona, because I wanted to tell you simply this—that I love you. I'm no good at pretty speeches or that kind of thing, Rona, but I love you—that's all I can say: I love you, with all my heart and soul . . . will you marry me, Rona?"

He advanced a step nearer her. His heart was beating as if it would burst. Her beauty, as she stood in the moonlight, her head downcast, demurely turning over a pebble with her satin-shoed foot, intoxicated him. He longed to hold her in his arms.

"But, Calum, you're very young, you know," she said, provocatively. "How old are you? Twenty-nine, is it? How do you know you have made up your mind. Besides, can you keep a wife? Barristers are so poor, aren't they?"

"You know I can keep a wife," he replied hoarsely. "You know I'm one of the rising advocates. It's not everyone who is contesting a county before he is thirty. . . . Rona, don't play with me. Do you love me? Tell me, Rona! . . . Yes or no."

He caught her hands in his. She made no

movement to withdraw them. Their eyes met. . . . . Suddenly she said:

"Give me time to think, Calum; give me a week. A week to-night I will tell you if I can marry you. But I must have time to think. . . You will allow me that, won't you? Surely that is not unreasonable?"

Across her mind there flashed the vision of a boyish face. He had been a walk with her only that afternoon. He was home on leave, over there in the manse among the trees: she would have liked to see him to-night—he was going away to rejoin his regiment to-morrow. For one instant her higher self came out top. She knew she loved that boy. And for a moment a vision of the future came to her—love and poverty, the wife of an officer with little but his pay, with nothing to lay at her feet, save an adoring heart and an unsullied honour. For a moment the holy beauty of that picture seemed to hold her. She glanced at the man beside her—life with him! How different! The rising politician, his name already becoming a household word, wealth, fame—and? No, she certainly did not love him

as she knew she loved Iain. For an instant she hesitated, and asked for time to think.

"O, all right, Rona," he assented, grudgingly, "as you will; but a week from to-night you will tell me, won't you?"

"Yes, I will. A week from to-night. And now, you must let me go, Calum. Goodnight!"

"Goodnight, Rona." He raised her hand to his lips and kissed it. . . . She glided away into the shadows, but was almost immediately at his side again.

"Calum," she asked, with an effort at indifference, "Iain goes off to-morrow, doesn't he?"

"Yes; to rejoin."

"I don't suppose I shall see him. Say '*Au Revoir*' for me, will you?" She laughed lightly. "Did Iain never fall in love with me? I often thought he might have! A woman likes to know these things, you know!"

And with the eyes of the girl he loved looking straight into his soul, Malcolm Mackenzie lied —and on a woman's heart, feeble yet struggling to be true, the cruel words fell hard and merciless, like the thud of clods on a coffin.

"Iain?" he laughed scornfully. "I should think not! Iain's affections have always been centred elsewhere."

There was a moment's silence—a moment pregnant with that awful agony which seizes a woman's soul when she realises that she has loved . . . and has lost. Then two hands were laid on Mackenzie's shoulders, and two eyes looked into his.

"I reverse my decision, Calum: I shall tell you now . . . I will marry you."

. . . . . .

Mackenzie stood still like a statue long after she had vanished from sight. He was lost in the dreamland of his newly-born hopes. And so he did not notice the shadow which fell across the doorway of the little chapel. At last he looked up, started, and turned pale in the moonlight. His brother stood in the doorway confronting him, motionless as a sphinx, his arms folded across his white shirt front.

The elder laughed nervously.

"Hullo, Iain, old chap! What on earth are you doing here? Strange place to meet in, eh?" He laughed again, a horrid mirthless laugh.

Iain made no answer.

"What the devil's the matter, Iain?" began the other again. "Don't stand there like a spook . . . it looks quite uncanny!" Once more he laughed thinly.

And the figure in the doorway spake not.

Malcolm Mackenzie pulled out his cigarette case.

"Have a cigarette, old boy, and then let's walk home. It's beastly cold out here." He extended his case to his brother.

Iain spoke at last.

"I was not eavesdropping—I was out for a walk, if you want to know, because I like being near the house of the girl I love—but passing here I couldn't help hearing your last words. So that's been your game, has it? . . . You dog!" he said, and struck his brother in the face.

Malcolm Mackenzie fell backwards with a crash among the tombs.

(4.)

The world of friends and acquaintances could never understand what suddenly came over Iain Mackenzie. Those who were worth while knew that there was something behind it, and spoke up for him; the others professed that they had known he was that sort all along. And good kind people carried little tales to the sore-hearted mother—it was for his good that his parents should know, they said. And the patient mother heard it all, as mothers will: and the only effect it had was to make her letters to her boy more cheerful, more loving, more tender.

And she believed in him to the end—believed in him until that terrible day when in every newspaper in the land it was announced that the King had no further use for the services of Iain Mackenzie. And then followed the journey to Canada, the infrequent letters, the letters ceasing . . . and bit by bit the awful news of a shameful life, of a manhood wasted, abilities prostituted, a name dragged in the gutter . . .

imprisonment . . . then silence, years of silence.

Aye, and in her broken heart, the mother believed in her boy still.

Surely here is the fount of tears, when a woman weepeth for a wayward son.

(5.)

For three hours in the late afternoon our guns had bombarded the German lines beyond S. Patrick's wood; for three hours the white-smoked shrapnel had burst in clouds above the trenches and the high explosives had battered mercilessly on parapet and traverse, leaving behind them gaping rents in the walls of sandbags and huge yawning craters before the breastworks. From the British lines, not a hundred and fifty yards distant, the gunner observing officer watched the performance through his periscope, while the men of a Highland territorial regiment lolled on the mud floor, smoking and playing cards. Some slept by their rifles, in shelters made of water-

proof sheets slung on four poles; others sat crouched on sandbags, writing letters; a few played mouth organs: and all blasphemed with unanimous satisfaction that our guns "were giving the Germans hell."

At half-past four the bombardment ceased, and the deafening noise abated. The gunner officer folded up his periscope with a complacent smile, and proceeded to pick his way along the narrow muddy trench towards the company commander's dug-out, which was situated in a cellar at the far end of the trench. The gum-booted subaltern squelched through the mud and ooze and finally crawled on hands and knees into a raw damp cavity, piled up on all sides with sandbags and roofed with logs and several feet of earth and clay. It was a horrible hole, and smelled like a vault. The walls were oozing with water and green slime. On the wet floor were spread some waterproof sheets, in a vain effort to keep the water from coming through. Two empty biscuit boxes, a few tins of bully beef and jam, a couple of officers' packs, and three or four boxes of ammunition made up the furniture. Over the

entrance hung a foul-smelling piece of sacking. A guttering candle stuck in a broken bottle, labelled "Dewar's Whisky," illumined the place with a dim ghastly light. In the corner sat a man, his knees drawn up to his chin, his face gaunt, hollow-eyed, unshaven. He was enveloped in a huge mackintosh, bound round the waist by a revolver-belt, and over his ears was pulled an oilskin cap.

"Well, Mackenzie," said the gunner, seating himself gingerly on a biscuit box, "we've given them gip this time, eh? Got a fill? I've left my baccy down at the battery."

Captain Malcolm Mackenzie slowly disentangled his limbs, pulled his pouch from his pocket, and handed it across the cellar. The gunner proceeded slowly and methodically to fill his pipe . . . lit it with the third match, and puffed it into life. He was a spruce-looking youth, well-shaved and trimly dressed —a marked contrast to the mud-clothed ill-kempt infantry officer opposite him.

The pair smoked in silence.

"Did you watch the shelling?" broke in the gunner.

"I did," replied Mackenzie. "Couldn't make much of it either," he added.

"Neither could I," said the gunner in a dissatisfied tone. "That hollow in front where they have their entanglements prevented one from seeing what effect the shells were having. It's a beastly nuisance; but there was nowhere else where one could observe from except this trench. However, it'll be all right, I've no doubt," he added cheerily, and took his departure.

Mackenzie sent at once for his subaltern.

"Look here, Marjoribanks," he said, when that youth crawled into the dug-out, "as I told you this afternoon, we attack that German trench in front at eight. Our company leads the attack. Well, I'm not so sure that the guns have done over-well with their barbed wire. That gunner subaltern isn't too sure, either. Now, unless that wire has been completely smashed, we'll never get through, and what's more, none of us will ever get back. It lies in that beastly hollow in front of their trench, and we can't see exactly what has happened. It's dark about seven. Take two or three of

your scouts out about that time, and have a look at their wire. If it isn't broken enough I'll 'phone straight to Brigade Headquarters —it's irregular but it will save time—and tell them we can't possibly do it—nor can anyone else. You ought to be back by half-past seven, and that gives us a clear half-hour to get the affair knocked off if need be. Now, look alive, old man, and take care of yourself."

"Right, sir. Who supports us to-night if we do attack?"

"The ——th battalion of the Canadians . . jolly good fellows too."

At seven o'clock three men crawled round the end of the trench and set out towards the German lines. It was a misty night and bitterly cold. The moon was impotent to pierce the thick gloom, but the chill wind which swept over the flats threatened to blow the mists away—and already stars were becoming visible, far-off, indistinct. The creeping men shivered as they crawled over the sopping no-man's-land between the trenches. The officer peered at his illuminated compass, and crept slowly on upon his hands and knees: the two others kept close

behind him, dragging their rifles with bayonets ready fixed. A desultory fire was being kept up from both lines, and the star-shells flared up frequently, but, owing to the heavy mist, they only made the gloom the deeper. For a quarter of an hour they kept on thus, picking their way through bog and swamp, now and again coming across the dead body of some adventurous soldier, caught while prowling in the night. At length the officer spoke:

"We're right on their barbed wire now," he whispered to the man behind. "We appear to be at their left flank . . . now keep as quiet as mice, lads. If they hear us we're done. Are you ready?"

"Ready, sir," was the muttered response.

They crawled forward a few yards, and then commenced to work along to their left. A short distance ahead loomed the huge breastworks of the German trenches. An occasional crack and spurt of flame told of the watchfulness of the sentries. In front of the trench yawned a deep ditch, and on the near side were several rows of barbed wire knife-rests, carefully pegged into the ground and roped together.

The trench was placed on the far side of the little hollow which prevented the result of the artillery's work from being properly seen from the British lines. That it had not been over-satisfactory was at once apparent to the little patrol. A few gaps had certainly been made, but enough of the entanglements remained to make an attack an absolute impossibility in the dark. The wire had been cunningly placed, in many places six strands thick, which would defy the strength of any wire-cutter. Flat on their stomachs, the three men wriggled along the ground and eventually reached the end of the trench. Marjoribanks turned and headed for his own lines.

"Hush!"

The man behind gripped him by the ankle.

"Still, sir, for God's sake," he whispered hoarsely, "there's a German patrol coming on our left."

They lay flat in the stinking mud, holding their breath. Sounds were audible on their left, boots squelching in the mud and heavy breathing. . . . Out of the mist, not fifteen yards away, loomed the figures of a German patrol,

almost a dozen strong. By the direction they were taking, they would pass within a few feet of the crouching men. They came on slowly, nearer, nearer.

"Your bayonets, lads . . . no shooting remember. . . ." Marjoribanks clasped his revolver by the barrel.

Nearer came the Germans, only about five yards away now . . . the Highlanders felt their hearts beating in their throats . . . the suspense was almost unbearable. Surely the Germans would hear them breathing. Nearer, nearer . . . the patrol stopped, and the grey-coated men held a colloquy. In a few moments they changed their direction and moved away into the darkness. Marjoribanks passed a hand over his clammy forehead.

"By gad," he muttered, "that was a close thing . . . come on, men, we haven't long. It's a quarter to eight."

Five minutes later he reported the state of the enemy's fortifications to his company-commander.

"You're infernally late, Marjoribanks," he said. "I've only ten minutes to get on to

Brigade Headquarters. If we can't get them to see the position, we must attack at eight."

"Sorry, sir. A German patrol held us up. We couldn't get in a moment sooner. We'd better go to the telephone dug-out."

A few seconds later the telephone was set to work.

The operator cursed and swore. He lay flat on his face in his vermin-infested shelter.

"Haven't you got them yet, man?" asked Mackenzie from the door-way. He glanced at his wrist watch—three minutes to eight.

"Just a minute, sir." The dirty, unshaven man in the dug-out tapped the unresponsive machine; more tapping, more oaths, and a head pushed aside the sacking over the door.

"Wire broken, sir."

Malcolm Mackenzie's face grew set.

"How long to mend it?"

"Gawd knows, sir. We've got to go out and find the break first. Might be hours."

The captain looked at his watch. Eight o'clock. He turned to his subaltern.

"Get the men ready for an attack," he said,

quietly. "We'll go out as soon as you are ready."

And, despite the dark, the young man saw the hand stretched out, and he gripped it for the last time on earth. None knew that better than he—he had seen the German wire.

. . . . . .

The line of khaki-clad figures crept forward in silence. There was no time to be lost; the mist was clearing, and at any moment the moon might betray them. Closer they stole to the German lines—closer still . . . now the trench loomed ahead, twenty yards, fifteen . . ten . .

"Hell!" muttered a corporal, as a strand of barbed wire caught his bare knees.

By pre-arrangement, the line halted on reaching the barbed wire, and waited for the captain's signal. The faces of the men grew white and tense as they saw the wire entanglements. It was worse than even Mackenzie had gathered from his subaltern's account. . . . Well, there was no use grousing; they had to do the job, and do it they would. If only that mist would fall again!

"God! what's that?"

From the line of crouching Highlanders a rifle exploded in the night air; the trigger must have caught on the barbed wire.

There was a yell from the German trench, a wilder yell as the surprised Highlanders rose and dashed at the cruel entanglements. And hell was let loose in the darkness. A hail of bullets flashed down on the little band caught and snared on the great wired knife-rests. Oaths and curses were mingled with the screams of the wounded and the groans of the dying. From either end of the trench began the hideous rattle of machine guns, and a storm of lead swept into the attacking force. Those who managed to get through the gaps broken by the artillery were shot or bayoneted as they climbed the parapets. Star-shells flared up, the mist cleared, and the moon shone down in cold beauty on the ghastly scene.

"Come on, lads, follow me," yelled Marjoribanks, to fall the next moment, blood spurting from his mouth.

"What price the Jocks!" shrieked a half-demented Tommy, tearing his lacerated limbs

from the entanglements and climbing the trench wall with his gleaming bayonet. A dozen bullets entered his body, and he staggered back yelling in agony.

"It's a long road to Tipperary this way, mate," gasped a lance-corporal, writhing in his death-throes.

"Ye want this kin' o' thing in the picture-hooses," said another man, his face and neck all torn and bleeding; "it wad mak' the swine enlist!"

It was all over in ten minutes. The succeeding companies met with the same fate. Scarce a man was left whole. Scores were stuck, wounded and bleeding, in the barbed wire: and at these luckless wretches bombs were thrown from the German breastworks. The din of the firing died away to be replaced by the ghastly groans and moaning of the tortured and mangled soldiers. And half an hour later the Canadians swarmed over the ground into the same hell of fire and bombs to fare the same. The ground in front of the German trench was piled with wounded and dead, drenched with blood and filth. A handful of men crawled

back to the trench they had so lately left, the sole survivors, to meet the Brigadier and his staff who had just come up, expectant of victory.

"What on earth has gone wrong?" asked the General, his face grey and haggard.

"Gone wrong, sir," gasped a Tommy, as he collapsed insensible at the officer's feet. "Gawd knows! This may be wot the newspapers calls war—I calls it bloody murder."

"And he's not far wrong, poor devil," said the General, as he turned away into the darkness.

. . . . . .

The moon rose high in the heavens and flooded the landscape with its pale light. The night was very peaceful now; the garner of death was full. Before the German lines the groans of the wounded were becoming fitful and feeble, and the German sentries, by firing at a stricken man whenever they saw him move, were by their brutality performing acts of mercy. They lay in heaps, some with their pale blood-stained faces turned towards the eternal

skies, others but shapeless heaps. An old grizzled Catholic sergeant had contrived to draw from his pocket an ivory crucifix and raise it to his lips before he died: a thin-faced boy was holding a letter clasped in his hands, the last one from his mother far away in the dear home-land. O ye unknown heroes of our land, coming from your humble waesome homes, giving so freely, so ungrudgingly, your life, your all; stacked in heaps like the refuse by the roadside, with no halo of romance about your death and no lips to sing your praise—may God rest your gallant souls!

Where he lay before the German trench Malcolm Mackenzie opened his eyes and groaned. He tried to move, but his limbs seemed powerless; his head was throbbing as if it would burst; his throat was on fire with a maddening thirst. He lay in a pool of blood, and his feet were pinned down by the body of a dead soldier. If only he could get some water, just a drop—anything to touch his parched tongue. . . . He tried to raise his hand to his aching head, but a piercing pain made him desist. . . . He groaned again.

A wounded Canadian sergeant, a few feet away, turned his head.

"Feeling bad?" he asked softly.

"Water, water," was the hoarse response, "give me some water."

"I'll try," returned the other, "but I'm all paralysed . . . I'm shot in the back . . . think it's the spine. I seem to be getting numb all over. It'll reach the heart eventually, thank God; I only wish it would come soon. Are you bad, mate? . . . O, sorry, sir; I didn't notice you were an officer."

"I'm dying," whispered Mackenzie; "I've got 'em all over me . . . head as well."

The Canadian said nothing, but began to wriggle towards the wounded Highlander; every few seconds he stopped, the pain of moving was agonising. But he came nearer and nearer, his face white and drawn; at last he was close to Mackenzie.

Zipp! A rifle spat out from the parapet above them, and the Canadian gave a groan of pain. The German sentry had seen the movement and accorded it the usual reception.

"Hit you?" asked Mackenzie.

"Yes!" gasped the sergeant; "one more or less makes no difference now," he added, with a ghastly grin.

Carefully he got out his water bottle and held it to the other's lips. Mackenzie drank deeply . . . turned his head and smiled his thanks.

The Canadian's outstretched hand dropped to the ground. Despite the bullets his moving might draw, he raised himself on his elbows and peered long and earnestly into the officer's face. And suddenly the red horror of the battlefield faded before his eyes, the heaps of bleeding corpses melted away like the dawn-mist, and before him rose great hills, heather clad, encircling a lovely Highland clachan, and an old grey church standing by a running burn; like the strains of some sweet forgotten music in his ears, there sounded its eternal song as it flowed over the pebbles and down to the waterfall by the ivy-mantled mill. He saw, as if in dreams, a long, low, white-washed manse embowered in trees, and on the lawn in front two little children were playing—he heard the sound of their innocent laughter.

Suddenly, as it came, the vision passed—he

was staring into a wan pale face that stared back at him with eyes filled with incredible wonder and amazement.

"Calum!"

"Iain!"

A great silence followed, and then they began to speak. And brokenly they spoke of the long-past years, of their memories, of their childhood, of their youth. There was no mention made of that which had estranged them—the time was short and both knew it. During the minutes that remained they would be children again, happy among the flower-decked gardens of the dreamland of happy childhood. And to Calum was told the story of his brother's wasted youth, of the sin, the misery, the shame; of the endeavour to atone and to raise his name from the mire, of the frequent falls, and of the final victory.

"I was going to write and tell them all about it at home," said Iain, "when war broke out. And I thought I would wait till I had crowned it all with some good work out here. They would have been so pleased."

And Iain heard all about the old home, about

the white-haired minister and the sweet-faced mother; that the canary in the morning-room was not singing so much now, and that the old grey cat was dead. The red rose was still blooming on the south wall, and the brown mare had gone blind in one eye. Jock MacPhail was still the grave-digger, and Angus Macintosh, the game-keeper, had retired on the old age pension. And as he listened, his face shone with a radiant smile.

"Did mother and dad ever forgive me for the mess I made of things, Calum?" he asked presently.

"Aye, Iain, long, long ago . . . you'd have had such a welcome home, if ever you'd cared to come. They knew the reason of it all. I told them. I was a low cad to you, old boy . . God forgive me."

"I broke their hearts, old man," Iain continued. "I know it, but I've tried to atone. My disc will let them know that I've given my life, at any rate. Dad used to call that the Supreme Sacrifice."

They lay in silence for a while. Iain broke it.

"Calum," he whispered, "did you marry her?"

There was no answer. Calum's eyes were closed. Iain poured some water into his mouth. The dying man looked up.

"Did you marry her, Calum?" he repeated.

A long pause—he was panting for breath; at last he spoke.

"No, Iain. She jilted me for the rich brewer's son who bought Glenmore. It was all for nothing that we quarrelled, lad; God forgive us both."

Malcolm Mackenzie's mind began to wander. He was back again in the old home among the mountains, poaching in the Dunranald preserves, guddling for trout in forbidden waters, bird-nesting in the cool deliciousness of Spring. As his brother listened, his eyes filled with tears. Soon Calum's broken mutterings ceased. He opened his eyes, and with difficulty half-turned on his side.

Zipp! a bullet spat into the ground beside him.

"Are you there, Iain?" he whispered. "It has grown very dark, surely . . . I can't see you."

Iain put his aching hand into his dying brother's. Calum Mackenzie sank back with a sigh of content.

"We haven't been the brothers we should have been, lad," he gasped, "but . . . we'll start afresh, Iain."

And with his dying lips he framed the words wherewith in days long dead at nightfall their childhood's quarrels had ever been smoothed away.

"Good-night, Iain . . . we'll start afresh . . . . in the morning . . ."

He was still speaking, and Iain strained to catch what he was saying. It was not addressed to him, for in those words which he had learned at his mother's knee, Calum was speaking unto Him whose greatest glory it is that He heareth the prayer of this poor world—those words so hallowed, so trustful, so pure, constituting in their sweet simplicity the grandest of all liturgies:—

"Our Father . . ."

. . . . . .

Dawn was breaking, soft as the wing of a dove, in the eastern sky. Iain Mackenzie tried to move. A strange sleepiness was creeping over him . . . he knew it was the end. With a superhuman effort he raised himself and drew himself across his brother's body, kissed the pale cold lips, and, as he used to do before he fell asleep in the long-gone days of childhood, he pillowed his wearied head upon his dead brother's breast.

"Good-night, Calum," he muttered drowsily, "we'll start afresh . . . in the morning . . ."

(6.)

The Summer was past and Autumn had faded. The Winter snows had capped the mountains of Glenfeulan, when one afternoon old Angus Macintosh, the game-keeper, wended his way from his cottage by the river towards the clachan. A thaw was in the air as he picked his steps down the slushy road. As he passed by the wall of the old churchyard, he was amazed to see Jock MacPhail, the grave-digger,

hard at work in a half-dug grave at the far side of the burying ground, steadily heaving up spadesful of wet sodden earth. Old Angus knew of no one who was dead in the parish. Beside the grave-digger stood two soldiers, muffled in khaki great-coats . . . strangely familiar figures. And having watched the unwonted sight for a while, he hobbled on, for it was cold; and, moreover, he had no time to waste. It was the minister's burying-ground that Jock MacPhail was digging, he ruminated . . . or at least it must be very close to it.

As he passed the smithy he hailed Seoras Garbh, who could always be trusted for the latest news of the parish.

"Who is dead in Glenfeulan?" he queried.

Seoras leaned on his sledge-hammer and stolidly surveyed his questioner.

"Dead? It's yourself that should know. There is nobody dead that I know of."

"But Jock MacPhail is digging a grave up there," persisted old Angus, jerking his thumb in the direction of the churchyard. "And what is more, it is the minister's ground, or next to it."

Seoras Garbh spat in his hands and turned to his work. There was nobody dead in Glenfeulan.

And Angus Macintosh went on his way perplexed in mind.

Late that afternoon, as he returned home, the shadows were lengthening over scaur and corrie. The evening breeze scarcely disturbed the ghostly mist which hung over the ground. It was growing rapidly dark, and the stars were twinkling from a clear sky. As the gamekeeper passed by the desolate churchyard he suddenly bethought him of the strange grave, but, peering through the mist, he was unable to see to the far side. He stood for a moment irresolute, then, clambering with difficulty over the low dyke, he waded through the long dank grass near the wall and over the silent mounds to the spot where Jock MacPhail had been at work. A curious sight met his gaze. The ground was clothed in virgin grass, and never had a spade touched a blade of it! Stunned with astonishment, he rubbed his eyes and looked again: but nothing could alter the fact that there was no grave, neither had the

grass been in any way disturbed. And Angus Macintosh knew that he had seen a vision.

Slowly there came to his mind the two silent figures beside the grave-digger—he had vaguely wondered, as he saw them, who they were like: now he knew.

"Maister Calum," he muttered, "it was Maister Calum—an' t'other was Maister Iain. I ken him fine, though years it is since I seen him."

His eyes fell upon the old gravestones of the Mackenzie family, weather-beaten, their writing half-obliterated . . . a great sob broke from the aged Celt.

"God of my fathers!" he cried to the darkening sky, "God of my fathers! is this the end? Five generations of Mackenzies have ministered here—and is this the end? *Horo, Horo!* the book is closed on the story of two hundred years!"

And Angus Macintosh, knowing full well the meaning of that which he had seen, crept away into the gloom.

. . . . . .

That night in the dining-room of Glenfeulan Manse the household assembled for evening worship. The crimson glow from the shaded candlesticks fell softly on the faces of the little company. On the walls the old portraits of past generations glowered through the shadows.

At the end of the table sat James Mackenzie, the Book open before him, and, as he read, his sweet voice thrilled every heart with a strange peace. And then they sang together, after their old Highland custom, that psalm so dear to Scottish hearts, which has floated heavenwards so often from the blood-drenched plains of Flanders ere the strong, brave sons of the northern mountains went forward into battle—

> "I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
> From whence doth come mine aid.
> My safety cometh from the Lord,
> Who heaven and earth hath made.
> Thy foot He'll not let slide, nor will
> He slumber that thee keeps.
> Behold, He that keeps Israel,
> He slumbers not, nor sleeps."

They sang it to the end, and then they knelt as the minister prayed for the dear lads far

away, for Calum in the trenches and for Iain, wherever he might be; that He with whom light and darkness are both alike would surround them with His everlasting Arms, and shelter them on the bosom of His boundless love.

And though they knew it not, in the mud before a German trench Calum and Iain Mackenzie rested in each other's arms; and on their faces there hovered a smile as if their dreams were passing sweet.

. . . . . .

Outside in the darkness a rising wind howled round the ancient church, and soughed wailingly over the mossy mounds where, each in his narrow bed, five generations of Mackenzies slept their last sleep—five generations who, from father to son, had ministered in Glenfeulan, and, scorning the call of the world, had preserved the quiet tenor of their way, the faithful shepherds of their simple sheep.

As he sat over his peat fire in his cottage, Angus Macintosh listened to the low moan of the river and the sob of the wind, with a heart as heavy as lead.

And round the eaves of the white-washed manse the night wind sang the coronach of a vanished people, and scurried around the gables with a shuddering sigh, as if the spirits of the lost race were abroad.

The old home must pass to new hands, the hoary old walls must echo to new voices, and the honoured name be forgotten for evermore. It is the way of all the world, it is the heritage of all flesh.

Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust——

Christ have mercy upon us!—when the end of the tale be told.

THE WAYSIDE CROSS

THE WAYSIDE CROSS

THERE is a little village in Belgium which was very fair to look upon at one time. Nobody lives there now—the very rats have been scared away. Not one stone of it is left standing on another. The village is situated on the side of a small hill and the street runs up to the summit of it, and there stood the village Calvary, massive and life-sized, the dead Christ and two weeping women. There it stood and there to-day it stands, for though the village is but a heap of bricks the three silent figures have never been scratched by the smallest splinter of shell or bullet. All around, the countryside is flat, and miles away on a clear day one can see the Calvary, dark on the skyline. And one wonders at it. The peasants still at work in the surrounding fields shake their heads when one comments on the strange fact. They will push back their caps and scratch their heads and turn slowly to look at the figures on the sky

as they speak of it. . . . Strange things are happening in Flanders, they will say, and the cross has been left for a purpose. Was not the curé murdered there? . . . And they will urge on their slow-footed oxen and leave you to your own thoughts.

It takes some time to get it, for they are a reticent folk—dull, with dreamy eyes and wistful faces. But when one has heard it, the tale is worth the telling. For, as the peasants say, strange things are happening in Flanders.

(1.)

It was in the hot August days of more than a year ago that to these remote parts came tales which froze the blood and seemed to darken the sun. There is no railway near the village but the news trickled in day by day, news past their comprehension, stories of war and lust and blood, records of hell and hate, vast, unspeakable, beyond imagining. And in the cool of the evening the peasants gathered in the low-ceiled *estaminet* in the shadow of

the church and discussed it over their pots of beer, the reek of their cheap cigars no more thick than the fog of their dazed minds. It was all incredible. Old Jules Fontaine, the innkeeper, said on Saturday night that he believed not a quarter of it. But he was half-tipsy when he said so, and on the Sunday the curé looked grave at mass.

That Sunday was never to be forgotten. There was an unusually large congregation, for all felt that the curé might have something to say about it. The service was listened to with a patient tolerance, and only when the old man mounted the pulpit steps, kissed the stole, and began to preach did the worshippers settle down to an interested attention. For once in his long ministry the preacher dispensed with a long-winded sermon; he was quiet and very simple, and his face was set and pale. In plain words he told them what it all meant, what it all would mean—that even now Liége had fallen, the Prussian hordes were pouring over their land, and the flower of their army was dead. With no attempts at eloquence the good man endeavoured to instil into them the bloody horror

of it all, and his voice broke as he spoke of those who already had died in supremest sacrifice, of the empty homes, the widowed hearts, the want, the misery.

A great sigh came from the listeners—they looked at one another as if half-asleep . . . then settled down again to listen.

The curé proceeded: but now his voice grew stronger and a pink flush spread over his pale cheeks. Raising his hand on high he called on God to witness his vow to be faithful to his king, to his country, and to Christ; and vowing for himself he vowed for his people. He spoke of their fathers, their history, their freedom; he told them of international treaties, sealed with the honour of nations, thrown as dust to the winds; he called on them to be true to the traditions of their ancestors, to all that was noblest and best in their race, to be ready to strike and to die for honour, for vengeance, for liberty——

Hark! what was it?

A great stillness fell over the preacher and congregation—faces grew white with dread. In the pulpit the curé stood as one dazed. A pin

could have been heard dropping . . . a man's foot scraped on the floor . . . a woman at the back gave an hysterical sob, smothered in her shawl . . . then silence again, deathlike silence.

Boom . . . boom!

It was the distant roar of guns. A shiver passed over the little band like the breeze over the corn . . . it was war! And war in their own fields, red war and blood and death! The awful reality burst on their minds like a flood.

Boom—boom—boom!

There it was again!

The curé hurriedly left the pulpit, crossed the chancel, and approached the altar. Followed by his acolyte he made his obeisance and stood before the tabernacle . . . the bell tinkled . . . there was a rumble as the congregation fell on their knees, and, turning to the people, the priest raised before them the Blessed Sacrament. Slowly he turned and replaced it on the altar. Then he knelt, crossed himself . . .

"My brethren," he said, "in the presence of the most sacred Host, let us pray in our hour of

darkness—for Holy Church, for our King, for our Fatherland, for preservation in danger and mercy in the hour of death, for peace and good-will among men . . .

"Ave Maria!"

Boom—boom—boom!

And the kneeling people shuddered.

(2.)

A few days later, in the heat of the noon, the grey-coated Prussian soldiers swarmed into the village, hot with the lust of slaughter and drunk with blood. The majority made for Jules Fontaine's *estaminet*—a bayonet thrust through his chest was the price he paid for having his door bolted. Others scattered through the narrow side streets in search of plunder, and vented their chagrin at finding little by committing foul outrages on defenceless women and children. Two young girls were afterwards found naked and dead in the yard behind the school. A mother who went screaming down the main street that her child

had been taken from her, found the little one stricken and bleeding near Jean Barbé's store. Those of the villagers who cowered in concealment in their cellars or garrets quailed as they heard the occasional rifle shots, followed by horrible moans which told their own ghastly tale. Half the houses were in flames.

Meanwhile the gang at the *estaminet* had drunk it dry, and maddened by drink and with brains on fire they sallied forth to join their comrades. The harvest of Nietzsche was reaped in full measure in the streets of that innocent hamlet. With bayonets fixed and dripping, the Prussian brutes took their vengeance for the black days of Liége, and did their bloody work with fiendish thoroughness.

Seated on a bench at Jules Fontaine's door, the officer in charge looked with inebriated satisfaction at the exploits of his minions. At last, determined to have his share in the orgie of slaughter and spoliation, this scion of nobility rose and lurched across the street towards the church. Several soldiers near by crowded after him with gutteral shouts.

"We'll burn the rats out," shouted the com-

missioned popinjay, waving his sword, "and we'll light up the church—get some wood and paraffin."

Hoarse yells of approbation greeted the proposal, and Jean Barbé's store soon supplied the requisite material. They piled logs high against the wooden porch, and soaked it all with oil . . . a burly sergeant-major struck a match——

"Wait!" commanded the officer; "there may be something in the church worth having. Let's have a look."

Headed by their leader, they poured into the dim church and clattered up the nave. They paused to look around—it took time for their eyes to get accustomed to the darkness of the building. A heavy-faced corporal clambered up the pulpit stairs and endeavoured to wrest from the wall a silver and ivory crucifix.

Click!

The group of soldiers turned and looked towards the chancel whence the sound had come: the corporal paused with his hand on the crucifix. Before the shadowy altar, the glow from the sanctuary lamp falling on his

white hair and pallid face, stood the old curé. He was dressed in his cassock, and in his right hand he held a revolver at full cock. Although he was very pale his eyes shone like a tiger's. On the altar behind him stood the Host fully exposed to view.

"The first man who takes anything from the House of God I will shoot down like a dog."

The quiet words, spoken in their own German tongue, penetrated through the whole building.

For a moment the soldiers stood amazed, but immediately they were themselves again. The officer fixed an eyeglass in his eye.

"Damn his insolence! Bayonet the pig," said he.

Two or three men sprang forward, and the corporal laughed coarsely and pulled the crucifix from the wall.

Crash!

A spurt of flame flashed from the altar and with a thick choking cry the corporal fell in a heap on the pulpit floor. With a yell of fury, the soldiers clambered over the chancel gates and sprang at the priest, hurling themselves on the old man like a pack of wolves. A bayonet

pierced him in the breast and the butt of a rifle struck him on the head—blood appeared on the silver hair, and half insensible he sank before the altar. With a struggle he turned and raised a bleeding face towards the Host.

"My Lord and my God!" he whispered. Raising himself, he stretched forth his hand, grasped the brass stand, and clutched the sacred symbol to his breast.

A great Prussian raised his rifle to finish the work when the officer interposed.

"There's a big cross up yonder at the top of the road—take him there; it will suit his piety, the canting dog. String him up on it, my men, although hanging's too good for him."

A dozen hands seized the dazed curé, and half-dragged, half-carried him out into the smoking village street. A number of intoxicated soldiers loafing outside hailed the appearance of the priest and his captors with hilarious shouts and joined in the procession up the cobbled street. Three times the old man fainted in their hands; cognac was forced down his throat, and each time as he recovered he was hustled on again. Whenever he showed

signs of flagging, a boot was ready to kick him forward. But always to his bosom he held the Host. Up the street they went, roaring and singing, past Jules Fontaine's looted inn, past the mayor's house where the stout old fellow had been shot dead an hour before in his own bed-room, and into the little square in whose centre was the village Calvary.

It stood silent and strangely ominous against a background of darkening sky.

The soldiers struggled up to the cross and threw their burden in a huddled heap at its foot. It had been hot work dragging the priest uphill and the air had grown oppressively sultry: great black clouds obscured the sun and came creeping up over the sky. . . . It looked like thunder. How hot it was!

"Hurry up, there," snapped the officer, who was growing rather wearied of the proceedings —and the climb up the street in the stifling air was so unpleasant—"hurry and string the old dog up, we can't wait here all day. . . . Ah! Good, Otto, my lad—that's the stuff for him—round his neck . . . that's it. . . . Now

over the cross bar with the other end. . . . Ach Gott! What is this?" . . .

A small boy came through the throng hesitatingly, uncertain — his little face white and timid. He wore a frayed cassock, discoloured with use and mended roughly here and there. For a moment he gazed at the coarse brutal faces glaring at him, and then his eyes fell on the motionless form at the foot of the cross, around whose neck Otto Schmidt was arranging a running noose. A wild look of terror and co-mingled love leapt into the boy's eyes, such a look as flashes in the eyes of a roe-deer when in the heather she turns at bay, to defend her young.

"*Ah, mon Dieu,*" he cried piteously, "*c'est mon père*" . . . and rushing forward he flung his child's arms round the priest. The old man on the ground opened his eyes to look into the pale sweet face of his little acolyte.

"Bless you, my child, bless you," he murmured, and through the clotted dust and blood on his beaten face he smiled the smile of an angel.

For a moment the child gazed into the curé's

eyes, then laid his head upon his shoulder and broke into spasmodic sobs.

A German seized him by the collar to pull him away, but the boy struggled in his grasp and clung to the priest's hand. The big soldier gave him a cuff over the head, and with a cry of pain the acolyte turned on him, a look of living hate in his tear-stained blue eyes.

"*Cochon!*" he hissed between his teeth, and spat in the Prussian's bearded face. There was a roar of laughter from the man's comrades, a moment of silence while he dropped the boy . . . a flash of steel, and a child's sob and groan as the little body fell to the ground bayoneted through the heart. Another roar of laughter greeted this exploit. Conscious, yet too weak to move, the priest watched the horrible scene with eyes full of agony.

And the sky grew darker every minute.

"Now for the priest!" They crowded round the prostrate body and raised him to his feet, supporting him against the cross. . . . As he leaned against it, the blood from his wounded head covered the feet of Christ. . . . The rope was adjusted round his neck. Otto

paused and looked around; how terribly dark it was growing, and so sultry. He loosened his collar; he could hardly breathe.

"Father, forgive them——"

The whispered words of the Master were the last the curé ever uttered. With a shout of merriment, the murderers swung him high on the cross bar, where he hung in death beside his Saviour.

And the sky grew ever darker.

"Give him his toy," laughed the officer, looking at the Host where it lay in its brass stand, covered with dust, having dropped from the priest's hands; "he'd better have that with him too." He drew his sword and carelessly pricked it through the glass covering, and pierced the sacred wafer—raised it on the point of the blade towards the swinging corpse.

"Here's your plaything," he mocked. . . .

There was a burst of blinding light, an ear-splitting crash, a long deafening roar—another flash, another roar as of ten thousand cannon—the earth reeled and shivered under the shock, and after the flashes the world became as dark as night. . . .

And through it all the dazed stunned soldiers heard the scream of Captain von Hartmann as he fell dead, and the horrible curse of Otto Schmidt as the breath of life was struck from his body. . . . Lying flat on the ground, knocked down by the force of the lightning, they felt the rain descending in sheets. In a few minutes they rose to their feet. For a moment they stared before them—the ghastly realisation was beyond their grasp—then with shrieks of agony and terror they turned and staggered away into the gloom.

For the light of day had gone from them, and they were blinded each one!

. . . . . .

A few hours later, when the storm abated, two peasants who had watched the whole scene from a hiding place near by crept out and crossed over to the wayside cross. Four corpses lay at its foot—a little child, a German officer and a soldier, and the village curé. The rope that hung him had been burnt by the lightning. The sun was struggling through the clouds, and steam was rising from the sopping

clothes of the dead men—their white faces and staring eyes made the peasants shudder. Crossing themselves, they knelt beside the curé. From his pocket a small Bible had fallen on the ground. It was all damp. One of the peasants picked it up, turned it over, opened it at random. His eye fell on these words, which, being translated, are:

"And I saw a great white throne and one sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away: and there was no place found for them.

"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne. And the books were opened: and another book was opened, which was the book of life. And the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

"And the sea gave up the dead that were in it: and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them. And they were judged, every one according to their works. . . ."

Without speaking, he passed the book across the curé's body to his friend. The man read the words in silence. . . . Both looked down

the hill at the ruins of the burnt village—the wrecked street dotted with dead, some houses still smouldering despite the rain. They turned their eyes to the great crucifix standing glistening in the sun—the cross, the dead Christ, all unharmed. . . . And their hearts felt comforted, they did not quite know why.

Strange things are happening in Flanders, so say the peasants.

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

IT happened on Christmas Eve, 1915. It will happen again all the land over on Christmas Eve, 1916; and so to the end of the chapter. For we are marvellously quick at wronging the right and wondrous slow at righting the wrong.

About a quarter to the hour of midnight a subaltern, his leave at an end, wended his way towards the big city railway station by a short-cut which lay through a slum locality. Near the end of a dingy poverty-stricken street, he tripped over something—almost fell.

"Confound it!" he snapped.

The obstacle proved to be a pair of legs belonging to a small child, a girl, who was sitting on a stone step at the entrance to a foul-smelling close. A wretched mite she was, with long dank unkempt hair, a dirty face, pale and pinched, and eyes bright and wolfish as if with hunger. She seemed about five years of age. Her clothes were filthy rags.

"What on earth are you doing here at this time of night?" asked the subaltern. "Where's your mother?"

"Muvver's upstairs—she's dead drunk," came the unconcerned response.

"And your father—where's he?"

"Favver's in France—he's a sojer."

"And have you no brothers or sisters? No one to look after you but your mother?"

"No, I live alone with muvver—Mister Smith lives with us, too; he's muvver's friend as has stayed wi' 'er since favver turned sojer . . . he's drunk too."

A shiver of horror passed over the young officer.

"But what are you doing here, child, so late? You ought to be in bed. Can't a neighbour give you a bed if you're afraid to go to your own home when your mother's like that?"

"I'm not 'feerd. I'm waitin' to hear the angels sing—they sing at twelve o'clock, so teacher told us—'cos Jesus is born."

A lump rose in the officer's throat. Moved by a strange impulse, he bent down and kissed the wisened wee face.

"That's right, dear," he said gently. "Listen for them—listen for them always. You'll hear them some day, if you listen long enough."

And he hurried off down the dingy ill-lit street.

Round the corner, beneath a lamp which illuminated a great poster inscribed with the words, "Your King and Country need you," two strong-looking young men were engaged in a coarse drunken squabble.

And ever before the officer's eyes, as the express swung and rattled through the night, there rose the vision of a little child, who, amid the sin and misery of a drab slum street, was listening for the songs of the angels.

"Poor kid," he muttered, "she won't listen for very long. The angels' song will soon be drowned by the gin-cracked voices of her squalid hopeless world. And who can blame her?"

The cry of the children, the cry of the children. . . .

And so few of us seem to care!

ALL'S WELL

ALL'S WELL

THE tide of battle was slowly receding eastwards, leaving in its wake a wreckage of devastated land, spoliated and ruined homesteads, smoking villages, and rivers whose waters ran red. The toll of life had been heavy, and for the most part the dead lay buried where they had fallen, thick like the Autumn corn before the ruthless sickle of the reaper. There is little room for the individual's obsequies in these days, and perhaps it is all enabling us to see things in a truer proportion . . . who knows? We were all just a little bit vainglorious before war began; just a little too apt to imagine the whole world circling about our own petty life and pettier interests—but the bloody realities of a titanic conflict, where battalions and brigades are but trench details which in the morning are strong and in the evening have vanished, have brought

the fact home to most of us that the years of man are but a handsbreadth, when all is said and done, and his life a shadow that remaineth not.

That tiny village sheltering in its world of green where the broad road bends at the old wooden bridge across the river had not come scatheless through the fight. The white plaster was falling off the battered walls, the red tiles and green shutters were broken and spattered with bullets . . . among the mounds in the churchyard the lovely little shrine was in ruins and the chancel still smouldered. Centuries before Europe wrestled in the throes of the Reformation that square towered church was the centre of the hopes and joys of the humble dwellers in the sweet hamlet by the river. And but a few months ago its walls were robed with ivy and fern and yellow-silver lichen, old walls and hoary, venerable and soft, and within them the altar light was never low and the sacrifice of praise and prayer arose ceaseless as the flow of the river beneath the portals. From the belfry, rising above the red-roofed cottages clustered beneath it, the deep-toned bell sang

in the morning and rang out the eve, pealed for the bridals and tolled for the deaths, the one marker of time's passing for those who dwelt here, far from the noise and striving of men. To-day the walls are roofless, the altar is ashes, the village is desolation. Pillage and rapine, fire and sword, murder and bloodshed, rushed like a torrent in spate into the fair smiling valley, tore it from the sequestered peace of centuries and hurled it into hell.

The moonlight flooded the landscape with yellow light; it was radiant on the shell-torn fields, it slept in tranquil loveliness on the deep dark river pools. Gaunt and scarred, the ruined church walls were etherealized by the pale luminous beauty of the night . . . the gravestones gleamed white and ghostlike . . . a great stillness reigned, broken only by the distant rumble of heavy guns. That day the village street ran with blood. Every window and corner spat fire. But at the point of the bayonet the British had captured the broken walls and now were using the place as an outpost. Along the road, past the entrance to the churchyard, a figure moved with regular tread;

the bayonet on the sloped rifle gleamed cold and cruel.

Often on his beat the sentry paused and looked over the low wall at the new made graves where the British dead were laid who had fallen in the village that day. But his gaze was chiefly fixed on his mate's resting-place . . . there were some flowers he had gathered placed near the rude wooden cross. He was a Celt, the man who slept there, and so was the sentry . . . both wore the bonnet and the tartan . . . the same Highland clachan had given them birth.

"*Dhé!*" he muttered in the Gaelic, "he died well, did Angus Cameron. It's not for me to grudge him a soldier's death. His folks will know in a few days, I suppose: I wonder what they're thinking now in Kilmorich . . . yes, sir: all's well."

All's well!

. . . . . .

The same moon that cast a halo of glory over that lonely grave in Northern France shone in peaceful radiance on the dark grandeur

of a distant West Highland loch. The rugged hills lay sleeping in eternal repose. On the rippled surface of the water the moonbeams danced and played—sparklets of living silver. It was cold. Duncan Cameron, the ferryman, stamped his feet as he sat patiently on the prow of his old tarred boat waiting for the passengers from the coach. He looked at his cheap watch —half-past ten . . . they were late. With a growl, he shoved a fresh quid of tobacco into his cheek. Ten minutes passed, and then voices were heard; two figures came out of the shadows towards the boat. Duncan Cameron gave a longing glance of anticipation at the red glow from his cottage window on the other side of the loch and unfastened the painter of the boat from the stake in the little jetty. The two passengers huddled into the stern of the old hulk, and the ferryman pushed off.

It was a strange weird night. A curious oppression hung like a pall over the world. The night wind swept chill and piercing across the waters and moaned through the ravines and pinewoods with a plaintive sough like a woman sobbing for her dead. In the distance the foxes

barked to one another. An owl hooted. From the shore the ferryman's dog howled, and the sound rose upon the night air loud and full of anguish like a wail of a lost soul. The Gael bent to his oars; the two men in the stern of the boat shivered and drew their coats closer about them. On all sides the great black masses of the mountains towered ghost-like, unreal. In silence the boat proceeded over the loch, leaving behind a glittering phosphorescent wake. The water gleamed like jewels upon the blades of the oars as they rhythmically dipped and rose in the soft moon-shine. Under his breath the boat-man was humming a low chant. . . . A great fish rose suddenly within a few yards of them to fall back with a loud splash into the black depths.

The boat glided from the moonlit loch into the shadow of the hills and grounded on the pebbles of the shore.

The passengers paid their fare and went their way.

"It's like a night for ghosts," one of them said with a laugh as he bade old Cameron good-night.

And the ferryman grunted sourly as he began to moor his boat. He lifted the oars and carried them into a wooden shed. Then he turned his steps towards his heather-thatched cottage. He had not gone five yards when he stopped, entranced by the witchery of the night. He would take a turn down by the big house; it was only a quarter of a mile and he would come back at once, as Mairi his wife would be waiting for him to read the evening chapter before she went to bed. And he wandered slowly down the white deserted roadway.

The road at this point runs along the shore. From it there is about three hundred yards of pasture, which sweeps up from the beach to the base of the mountains beneath whose shadow stands the big house of Kilmorich. Its carriage drive runs up from the road through the fields. Close beside the lodge gates there is a rough cart-track running through the fields parallel to the drive for nearly two hundred yards, when it turns off to the left into a thick wood, in the centre of which, bounded by a broken-down turf wall, is situated the ancient burial ground of the parish. It is a sweet spot,

this last home of past generations; the impenetrable copse of hazel and ash and fir encircles it with tender loving arms. No rude blast can ever enter here to mar the beauty of its sacred peace.

Duncan Cameron reached the lodge-gates of the big house and paused for a moment to light his pipe ere turning for home. He puffed it, threw the match away, and happened to glance down across the wide machar to the loch. . . . At first he thought it was only the moonshine particularly bright on a certain spot, but slowly upon him there dawned the fact that there was something moving out there on the waters, something strange, something made of silver light and sparkling water, of gossamer spray and star-spangled radiance, something indefinable—and it was moving, moving . . . coming towards him out of the sea.

The terrified ferryman tried to move but found himself powerless. A cold creeping horror seized him, numbing every limb. The apparition came slowly nearer, nearer. . . . At last it passed the love-line where the wavelets kiss the sand of the machar, and now it

seemed to take definite shape. There were three figures: two seemed of heaven and one seemed of earth. The man of mortal semblance walked in the centre and appeared to be weary, for he leaned heavily on a long pole. On either side of him walked one like unto an angel. Their faces were as the sun in his strength, and their eyes were like the brightness of the morning star. And on their heads were crowns of beauty fairer than the dawn. Their flowing robes of dazzling loveliness seemed woven of rainbow-hues and sunset lights. In the left hand each carried a large palm leaf that shone in the light, and in the right hand each had a crystal chalice, one filled as it were with blood, the other with clear water, diamond white. And as they passed over it the long machar gleamed with peace and radiancy and heavenly light. It seemed as if the winds and the trees sang together in mystic music, and the hills were full of a low sweet melody.

Nearer they came and ever nearer. . . They reached the road, and moved towards the cart-track that led to the old churchyard. . . . Duncan Cameron's face grew ashen grey and

his heart seemed to stop beating. For the man walking between the two angels was his only son. He appeared worn and very tired and footsore—on his feet was blood. His face was white and haggard and his shoulders were bent. He leaned heavily on his long pole—a pole such as they use in the Flanders trenches—and stumbled as he went. He was clothed in khaki and wore his equipment, mud-stained and dirty. But in his eyes there shone a light; he was like one who is weary and who sees the journey's end.

They crossed the road as if unconscious of the old man's presence, but when they passed to the cart-track the angel who carried the chalice with the white water turned and beckoned to him. And trembling and fearful, drawn by some strange spell, old Duncan staggered in their wake. Ever onward they went, and out from the bright moonlight into the darkness of the wood. But the radiancy of the angels made the darkness clearer than the fulness of the noon-tide. Once or twice the soldier paused and pressed his hand to his head, but always staggered on. The strange

thing was that he appeared to be unconscious of his spirit-attendants, for he never glanced to the right hand or the left.

They reached the little churchyard and entered by the old rusty gateway, the gate long since fallen off its hinges. The moon shone on the ivied walls of the ruined sanctuary and on the white gravestones and broken tombs of the holy place, where for fourteen centuries and more the villagers have laid their dead. Up the path they moved, then round the south side of the ruins, past the laird's vault and the minister's corner to the old burial ground of Duncan Cameron's ancestors. And here they stopped.

Old Duncan leaned against a gravestone and pressed his hands against his throbbing head. He felt he was going mad. Something was beating on his temples like a hammer on an anvil. . . . He looked up. Before him stood the angel with the chalice of diamond white water. But Duncan felt no fear in his presence, for from his diaphanous robes there breathed the incense of the gardens of heaven. And with a smile, softer than the sunlight on the

hills, he held forth the chalice to the old ferryman.

Prompted by some strange instinct, Duncan took the cup without hesitation. And he drank of it. By the bitterness he knew that he had quaffed a chalice of tears. But the angel did not let him drink all that was therein. Some he kept, and then moved to where the wearied soldier stood on his forefathers' graves, leaning on his trench pole. Then the angel with the chalice of blood gave it to the soldier that he should drink, and he too quaffed it without hesitation. But some the angel kept.

And all at once it seemed to Duncan Cameron as if from his son there fell the old mud-stained khaki and all the heavy accoutrements of war. On his shoulders there came a robe of shimmering light like to those of the angels, and on his head there was a crown of gold encircled with fair white lilies. And from his face passed all the weariness and pain, all tiredness and sorrow, and he grew everlastingly young. In his hands the angels placed their shapely palms. . . .

Duncan Cameron remembered confusedly about some people who had palms in their hands . . . his head was swimming: he couldn't remember where he had read it . . . palms in their hands!

His son stood before him. To the angels he gave back the palms, and they to him gave the two chalices. What remained of the blood and tears he poured on the ground between himself and his father, and from the mingling of the water and the blood was born a pure white dove of peace which rose and flew away into the wide green world, crooning a song of eternal hope.

Duncan Cameron saw his son raise his right hand with a happy smile and point upward; saw him pluck with his left hand a lily from his crown and drop it at his father's feet—remembers a vision of light against the black of the encircling wood and, as it seemed, the heavens opening and a mighty glory . . . . strains of sweet music . . . a great peace.

. . . . . .

It was raining. Duncan Cameron rubbed his eyes and peered around. There was light enough to see that he was in the burial ground. He struck a match and looked at his watch, sheltering the light beneath his coat . . . a quarter to four in the morning! Something white glittered on the ground. He picked it up —it was a beautiful specimen of a Madonna lily.

It all came back to him—the strange happenings of the past night. He was stiff and cold. He must have been lying there for hours. Mechanically he turned his steps homeward along the wet road . . . the night seemed to have clouded over quickly.

In the thatched cabin by the shore he found his wife sitting by the peat fire, hollow-eyed with anxiety.

" O Duncan," she said, " I thought you might be dead, *mo ghaol*. But whatever is the matter with you, man? Have you seen a ghost?"

" I'm not dead, Mairi Bhan," he said wearily, sinking into a chair, " but our Angus is . . ."

He told her the whole story by the glowing peats. And when he finished, the eyes of Mairi

Bhan were filled with tears; her Celtic heart had told her the hidden meaning of it all.

"It's God's will, *mo chagair,*" said she, brokenly, "and He knows best. . . . We'd better put up a bit prayer, Duncan."

And together these two lonely souls sent up their prayer from their humble dwelling amid the solitudes of the eternal hills. Quavering and broken their voices rose on the stillness of the early dawn.

Outside they could hear the sighing of the homeless sea.

. . . . . .

And far away, beneath the southern sky, a sentinel walked to and fro before a wooden cross, and whispered to the silence of the night that all was well.

THE
STRANGE MAN OF THE SEA

THE STRANGE MAN OF THE SEA

(1.)

THERE was a dull rumbling explosion—then silence.

H.M.S. ——— of the —— Cruiser squadron reeled as from a stupendous blow, shivered from stem to stern, writhed like a dumb creature in agony . . . then slowly settled down in the heaving waters, deeper, deeper, deeper every minute.

Bill Hawkins, A.B., found himself flung head-foremost from his hammock on to the deck, and awoke to the sound of stentorian shouts above him and his mates' loud blasphemy all around.

"Mined, by God!"

There was a rush for the deck. It was a wild stormy night and dark as the grave. The stars were invisible. Above the wind came the clear commands of the officers, and despite the

fact that for the majority, if not for all, death was riding on the billows, order and discipline at once asserted themselves. The boats' crews were at their respective davits . . . the first boat was filled and lowered into the yawning darkness . . . a mighty wave caught it and dashed it mercilessly against the iron sides of the great cruiser. A few cries from the drowning men were caught by the wind and mockingly swirled away. A second boat was swung out; the pulleys rattled, and down she fell, clean on the breast of a wave, the crew pulling like demons. Fifteen yards from the side, when almost lost from sight, she capsized on the crest of a drowning sea. . . . On the bridge the Irish commander crossed himself and commended his soul to his guardian angel.

Far down in the bowels of the ship there was a terrific roar—a rush of white steam from the funnels, and the great vessel, dignified and solemnly majestic to the last, slowly lifted her bow, higher, higher . . . stood almost vertical amid the seething waters—then silently slipped stern-first down into the black depths of the tempestuous sea.

Bill Hawkins, A.B., rose to the surface gasping for breath. He could not reckon how long he had been under water, sucked down by the vortex of the sinking ship. He felt almost deafened; a strange noise was in his ears. The water was perishingly cold and his left arm was numb and useless—something must have struck it when he went down. Bill Hawkins rapidly surveyed the position, floating on his back—alone on the North Sea in a storm, half-stunned and with a broken left arm, his total assets one life-belt—the betting was distinctly against him. In a flash, Bill had visions of a cosy little public-house with its red sanded floor in Portsmouth, of the green-eyed bar-maid who "walked-out" with him—when his infrequent spells of sobriety permitted that exercise—of the back-yard where an impromptu prize-ring was ever on the run and stakes were high and risky—of the disreputable and gaudy music-hall, whose tinsel and tarnish constituted the highest ideals of his soul—and the world that was slipping from him seemed a very fair world, indeed. It seemed hard to have to give it up at three-and-twenty, and to drift away to that

uncertain place which the parsons always spoke of, where people sat and played on harps all day. Bill wasn't musical—he had always hated the idea of having to play a harp—a mouth-organ was much better sport. He had once intended to ask the chaplain if a mouth-organ was to be had over on the other side, but he had forgotten.

It was hard luck. A towering wave surged down on him. . . . Bill gasped and spluttered and swore as only sailors can. Something was carried past him, and in the darkness he caught sight of a pale boyish face.

"Mr. Escott," he muttered, and, turning over, he swam with his one arm in the direction in which the face had gone. He took ten minutes to find him, a little midshipman clinging to a spar—the darling of the ship.

"Hullo! Hawkins," shouted the boy, his teeth chattering with cold; "this *is* a go, isn't it?"

"'Tis that, sir? 'Ave you got a belt?"

"N—n—o, I hadn't t—t—ime . . . she w—went down so quickly."

"'Ave you only got that spar, sir?" yelled Hawkins through the storm.

"Y—yes: but it's quite good enough—our number's up, Hawkins, a—and belts w—won't make any difference. It's o—only a m—matter of time."

Bill Hawkins, A.B., didn't reason. He just did what he did with a simple generous heart—how he managed it he cannot tell. He extricated himself from his life-belt and got it round the half-fainting midshipman despite his protests. In a few seconds he had the boy fixed somehow to the spar. . . . A great wave caught them and tore them apart.

"Good-bye, sir," yelled Hawkins, fighting for his life.

There was no answer save the howling of the winds and the fierce hiss of the spray.

. . . . . .

Hawkins had ceased to struggle; a great happiness was stealing over him, a delicious rest . . . the storm was sounding faint in his ears . . . it was far away now and did not

trouble him. He felt himself sinking, sinking into ineffable sweetness and peace.

He made one more effort for his life, and shook the water from his eyes . . . he was either mad, or—could it really be——?

Out of the darkness and through the spindrift a figure was approaching him, walking softly on the waves; and before him the great waters sank into quietness as a little child might fall asleep. The storm ceased, and the turbid billows fell into perfect calm, the dark clouds were riven and the moon in gentle beauty shone on an ocean of silver light. And the strange man of the sea came closer. He was clad in flowing robes of white, and on his head were many crowns. His face was of a beauty and tenderness passing that of the sons of men. And all round about him as he walked was a starry radiance as of another world.

As he approached he stretched forth his hands, and in the heart of Bill Hawkins, as he felt himself sinking and the cold waters touched his lips—in the heart of Bill Hawkins, the drunken reprobate, who scarcely ever had

given a thought to religion, who never had known a father or a mother's love—in his heart a dim chord of memory was touched. Down through the years there came the old tales of the teacher in the slum mission to which in his childhood he had once given a desultory attendance. . . . Could this be He? the man who walked on the waves in Galilee, long ago? the man whose name had never crossed his lips save as a blasphemy? Could this indeed be He?

Spasmodically Bill raised his right arm and stretched out his hand as he sank. The stranger's hand grasped it, and Bill struggled no more—he felt he was safe now, for it seemed as if the stranger raised him in his arms above the hungry waters, and far above the troubles of life.

Bill opened his eyes and gazed at the stranger's face. In a few moments he spoke, nervously.

"Look 'ere, if you are the person wot I thinks you are, why come an' help me? There's plenty of other blokes far better'n me to help—religious blokes and that sort of thing—all the blokes wot sing psalms an' things an' goes to

church . . . poor Bill 'Awkins ain't the one ter help—a black sheet 'e's got—an' 'e don't deserve to be 'elped either," he added emphatically. " Bill 'Awkins ain't never done nothing to 'elp any other bloke, so why should 'e deserve 'elp? Strike me blind, why should he?"

But he of the many crowned head only gathered Bill the closer to him and whispered with a voice like the softest music of the west wind.

" I was an hungered and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me—O blessed of my Father!"

And Bill Hawkins, A.B., could only stare.

" Only two hours ago you would have given your life that I might live—and greater love hath no man than this."

Slowly on the dull intelligence of the sailor there broke a faint light.

" D'you mean me givin' me belt to Mr. Escott?" he asked. " Blimey! that was nothink!—anyways, that didn't 'elp *you!*"

And the strange man of the sea answered and said:

"Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these, ye did it unto me."

A soothing weariness was enfolding Bill Hawkins. He did not feel any longer the icy coldness of the water or the numb aching of his injured arm. The encircling arms of the stranger gave him such a sense of repose, of security, of infinite peace.

"But me—*me,* poor Bill 'Awkins, who never went to church and didn't know no 'ymns or psalms," he repeated, "why 'elp me?"

"To seek and to save such came I into the world," answered the white-robed one.

"Even me?" asked Bill, softly and wistfully.

"Child of my love—even you."

And not being either a politician on the make or a popular preacher, Bill Hawkins, A.B., uttered no rhapsodies of rhetorical piety, but nestling in the embrace of the Helper of the helpless, he smiled a happy smile and said nothing, experiencing in full measure the reward of all his orphaned loveless years, as

he tasted of that love which is higher than heaven and deeper than hell.

"Blimey!" he muttered, with a great wonder in his heart.

And then he fell asleep.

(2.)

Homeward bound from Bilbao to Hull, the tramp-steamer *Evening Star,* of Greenock, churned her way through the impenetrable darkness of the North Sea. A fog was on the waters, and as the steamer forged slowly onwards, shewing few lights, the look-out for'ard kept eyes strained and ears alert for the slightest sound ahead. On the bridge the second-mate stamped backwards and forwards, half-frozen with cold. His blue face was swathed in a white muffler and the collar of his pea-jacket was turned up to his ears. He paused for a moment to blow into his hollowed hands, spat over the rail, and resumed his tramp. A few minutes later he stuck his head inside the chart-house door—only half an hour more, thank God!

The time wore on, and the fog seemed to grow thicker . . .

A shout from the invisible look-out made the second-mate rouse himself from soliloquizing on the hardness of life, and spring to the engine-room telegraph.

"What the 'ell are you sayin'?" he yelled to the man.

"Light on the starboard bow," came back the answer through the fog.

The second-mate leaned over the bridge-rail and peered into the gloom. There it was sure enough, shining ahead a little to starboard, a great clear bright light gleaming through the fog. He seized the telegraph, and down in the engine-room the gong clanged. The speed of the steamer was checked and gradually she drew to a dead-slow, the strange light being now in their wake.

The skipper came on deck, shivering in the cold.

"What's the matter?" he asked curtly.

The second-mate pointed to the light, still fixed and motionless, of extraordinary power

to pierce the fog . . . a strange brilliant effulgence.

"We'd better lower a boat," said the skipper at last; "there's somethin' queer about that light. It ain't no submarine or mine-sweeper or anythin' else. Look at the reflection o' the light. That brightness ain't shining from any given point, I'll bet my hat. There's somethin' queer about it . . . you'd better go with the boat, Smithers . . . seein' as 'ow you don't believe in ghosts," he added, with a grin.

The second-mate clambered down from the bridge, cursing under his breath.

As they pulled nearer the light its radiance seemed to decrease, and at last there was only enough to guide them, a white gleam in the fog, a few yards away. . . .

"Steady," said the man standing in the bow, "steady there . . . why, the blinkin' light's gone! . . . steady . . . *back water,*" he yelled suddenly, and as the oars struck the sea he leaned over and seized something floating past him. With a great effort he pulled it up,

and they dragged into the boat the form of an able seaman in the Royal Navy.

"Is he dead?" asked the second-mate, looking at the motionless figure.

The man felt the pulse and the heart of the sodden seaman.

"No, he ain't! he just appears as if 'e were sleepin'," he answered.

And at that moment Bill Hawkins, A.B., opened his eyes.

"Where is he?" he whispered.

"'Oo, mate?"

"The strange Man of the Sea?"

The crew exchanged meaning glances, and the boat crept back through the fog to the ship.

"A bit balmy, poor devil," said the second-mate softly; "he'll be alright in a few days."

(3.)

Bill Hawkins, A.B., is a changed man. He still sits, when he gets his infrequent leave, in a corner of some public-house and has his grog, but cells and drunkenness seemed to cease for

him after he had been rescued from the sea. He is known to have gone to the vicar of —— with the offer of two pounds which he had saved from his pay that it might go to "eddicatin' little children in religion." And when the vicar had refused to take so large a sum from him, Bill got embarrassed and shy, and broke into much swearing because he could not express himself otherwise. But the vicar understood and only smiled, and took the money without any more ado: and Bill and that vicar are now fast friends; so much so that when the war is over, Bill intends to go to church to hear him preach.

Bill Hawkins, A.B., rarely speaks of his strange experience, for he has a rooted objection to being called "balmy." But often in the lone night-watches, with the salt spray stinging his weather-beaten face, he finds himself wondering, as for two thousand years the whole world has wondered, what manner of Man is this whom even the winds and the waves obey.

QUI ANTE DIEM PERIIT
SED MILES, SED PRO PATRIA

QUI ANTE DIEM PERIIT SED MILES, SED PRO PATRIA

They are sleeping far from their native land
On a distant Flanders plain,
Their hills and glens and heathery straths
They n'er will see again.
The great sea tides will ebb and flow
And moons must wax and wane—
But grand old Clark and his Highland men
Will n'er come back again.

—C. STEWART.

(1.)

IN these days when the British Army is numbered in millions and countless men therein are heroes, some word of explanation is required when, from the hosts of the dead and the living, one name is singled out for eulogy or panegyric; but the only apology which I put forward for this unworthy portrait of a gallant Scottish soldier is that in his great and complex personality were combined all the elements which go to form the highest traditions of our race—

so that any man who knows of James Clark knows of the epitome of our national honour and truth, and of all that is purest and best in our blood.

Out in the trenches one loses sight of the caste questions of the homeland—there are no differences of blood there, for there is but one blood, the rich red blood of the strong and the free. And while a man lives, be he belted earl or simple yeoman, he is but a soldier; and when he dies he is but another warrior gathered to his rest. But when on that awful 10th of May, one looked on the face of James Clark, slain in battle, the great frame so calm and still, instinctively one's thoughts flew far away to the country of his love. "What will Scotland say," we asked one of another, "what will Scotland say when she knows?"

And two nights later she knew—two nights later the newsboys raced along the darkened streets of the northern capital, and "Colonel James Clark killed" echoed shrilly on the night air. Silent with dismay, men bought their papers, glanced at the fateful lines and hurried on their way. James Clark

killed! The words burned in on their senses. Members of the Bar heard it—James Clark killed! the gleam of old-world chivalry and romance amid the drab dinginess of Parliament House, the familiar figure of the Law Courts. Politicians and men of affairs heard it—James Clark killed! the tower of strength to Conservatism, the unwearied leader and worker for the public good. And far away when the morning's news penetrated into lonely country villages, the parish clergy read the words of woe with a catch in the breath—James Clark killed! the pillar of the Scottish Church.

From the north to the south there was lamentation in Scotland.

It is long since any man called forth such manifestations of sympathy and universal admiration. But great men are not as the sands of the sea. And in this generation it is doubtful if there will arise in the capital of Scotland a figure which can ever replace his, whose whole life was untiring labour for others and one long series of ungrudging self-sacrifice for his fellows. His was that unselfish love which

goeth forth to toil and seeketh no reward, which is content, if need be, to sweep the crossings in the highway of life while others sit in the seats of the mighty.

(2.)

Some people still wonder why Clark ever went abroad. There was no call—he was past age, and years before had retired from military service. There was great work to his hand at home, and work which could have been his with all honour. Those who wonder why, knew not the man. He who but a short time before was preparing to take up the sword for Ulster was not likely to let it rust in its scabbard at the hour of imperial extremity. And so he went, as one who greatly chose the path to immortality. He went in that simple unassuming way in which he did everything; a little shy, a little self-conscious, overwhelmed with confusion if anyone were short-sighted enough to praise him to his face, but with that iron will and indomitable resolution to do what he conceived to be his duty which guided all his

life. He may have been right or he may have been wrong: but the fact remains that James Clark lived and died a very gallant gentleman, and who are we to judge the acts of such as he?

I do not speak of him as a well-known public man, as a great churchman, or as a prominent educationalist—that has been done by worthier lips. I simply speak of him as I knew him, my colonel and my friend. When, in answer to his offer of service, he came to take over the command of the Dunbartonshire battalion, James Clark was faced with no easy task. He was a stranger to us. He succeeded, as our colonel, a long line of prominent county men. His traditions were not ours. He had little or no connection with our West Highlands. And under these auspices the big silent man came to take over the reins of government of an entirely new battalion, amid entirely fresh surroundings. It was a heavy task, and we waited to see what manner of man he would prove himself.

His personality did not take long to make itself known, and soon we realised his spirit

stirring in the battalion, the spirit of strength and love. It was mainly by love that he ruled us. We early saw that the outer mask of irritability was but the outcome of a highly strung and sensitive nature, that the strange silence and self-absorption were not assumed to keep us in our place, but were the fruits of a heart spent in communion with all things undying. And it was not long ere the humblest private in our ranks knew that in the colonel he had a faithful friend. "I've no friends to help me," once stated a morose defaulter at an orderly room. "Yes, you have one," replied the colonel, "and his name's James Clark." And so, looking on his silver hair and kindly face, his Tommies nick-named him from the affection of their hearts, and called him "Father Christmas."

It was because of the love that he made us feel for him that our battalion covered itself with glory under his leadership. We would have done anything for Clark. In him the old traditions of district and county were swept away, and we were proud of our colonel with that pride which causeth no shame. He

had his faults—we all have. It may be that he was a more brilliant tactician than organiser; that his judgment occasionally suffered from the tenderness of his great sympathetic heart. But no man was ever more beloved by those around him, and no man ever led a battalion in a grander nobler way, than he whose death darkened the sun for thousands upon thousands of Scottish hearts.

(3.)

They were strange qualities that made up his nature. A lion-like courage and amazing bravery were co-mingled with the simplicity and tenderness of a child. It did not take long, when we had crossed the Channel, before the men began to understand what kind of man he was, who, during the bombardment of Ypres, ordered his battalion to remain in cellars, while he himself walked about organising stray stretcher-parties while the great shells burst in clouds and the gutters filled with blood; or what was the nature of one who wandered about the woods behind the trenches alone and unarmed,

picking bunches of primroses and violets, or sitting listening to a running stream. And they loved him for it all with the deep strong passion of a soldier's love. They will tell you still—those few who are left—how, far more than their leader, he was their brother and their guide. They will speak of how he used to lead them at church parade in the old sweet psalms of their country, his face suffused with an unearthly light, his whole being throbbing with an ecstasy of devotion. They will brokenly tell of young lads sickened by the sight of blood, and of how James Clark would talk with them as an elder brother might comfort a younger, bidding them be men for Scotland's sake. By his example, their dim simple minds began to realise it possible to be a humble follower of the Nazarene and to combine therewith the highest excellence of manly strength: and many a heart to-day thanks God for the precious gift of him who, by his life and faith, ever taught their aspirations to rise above the din and tumult of earthly things to that calm eternal serene, where his own heart and mind had ascended and continually dwelt.

Had this war not been so vast, more would have been heard of James Clark. Lesser men in smaller campaigns have been elevated to the pinnacle of a people's hero-worship. Great men are born, not made, and he was a great man. It took a great man morning after morning to sit by the door of his dug-out with his open Bible in his hand, unashamed before men. And when one saw him then one seemed to be gazing back across the centuries, and to hear the voice of old General Skippon urging his men to pray heartily and fight heartily and God would grant the victory. That was the sort of thing James Clark would have said.

The spiritual influence which he brought to bear upon officers and men alike by his ever open avowal of his faith and by the still more striking testimony of his simple godly life, will never lose its effect upon those who were brought into contact with him. I cannot imagine Clark, like Swedenborg, drawing out in cold blood four idyllic Rules of Life: he simply did what lay as his duty, and walked before his God with a perfect heart. In him the tenets of Epictetus were blended with the

loveliest of Christian faith. He seldom talked: he acted. And when he had to talk on any serious purpose, with Pericles he thought it quite worth while to pray beforehand that not a word might escape him unsuited to the occasion. Amid this generation to find a man like that, is like finding a jewel of priceless worth amid the debris of a stable-yard.

It was he who conducted the burial service over every man in the battalion who was killed, if at all within the bounds of possibility; and no priest or parson have I ever heard commit a brother mortal to the ground with more beautiful words or with a more tender pathos than came from our colonel. I can see him still, on clear moonlight nights, bareheaded by the open graves—the big strong sympathetic man. I remember one night of howling wind and sleet; it was one of the wildest nights I have ever experienced, and James Clark was far from well. At the dead of the night they bore past his dug-out the body of a man who had been killed in the trenches, and they bore it silently lest they should wake the colonel. But he heard them, and rousing himself from

his bed of straw he insisted on going with them; and, despite the fact that the company officer had come for the purpose, Clark stood in the lashing storm, and tenderly as if he were a brother said the last rites over the fallen hero. That was the kind of man he was. "Your enemies are calumniating you behind your back," said his friends to Plato. "I will live so that none shall believe them," was the quiet reply.

(4.)

For a month on end we had manned the trenches with no relief. For the latter fortnight we had been shelled night and day. Through the hours of light and darkness for fourteen days every conceivable form of shell was hurled through the air to crash into our midst with its message of death. We lived in an atmosphere of sulphured hell. On Saturday, the 8th of May, our battalion held its line, though, as Mr. Buchan relates, 900 shells dropped into our trenches alone. At four o'clock on the Sunday morning we retired into

some adjacent dug-outs to be called into action again six hours later. All through that bloody Sunday the Highlanders were engaged, and were allowed to snatch a few hours' rest toward the dawn. Almost immediately the tocsin sounded again—for the might of the German Army was hurled suddenly on our line.

Swiftly the men donned their equipment. For about three days no man had tasted solid food. They were famished, bright-eyed with weariness, dirty, exhausted, yet no lip murmured. As we gathered in readiness to go into the inferno of shells that swept our course, the colonel came striding through the wood in which we were resting, to take his place at our head: and on his signal we started forward. What Plutarch said of the Spartans was eminently applicable that day to Clark.

"Where are they attacking, sir, and are they in great force?" asked an officer, for the trench line was obscured by a small wood.

"I don't know and I don't care," replied the colonel, with his wonted laugh, "but we're going out to find them."

The events of that awful day are still as the

phantoms of a hideous dream; the hail of shells, the smoke of battle, the roar of artillery, the shouts of maddened half-frenzied men. Yet from the ghastliness of the whole scene some pictures of beauty have imprinted themselves on my memory, and one of these is the figure of a tall noble gentleman, his white waterproof waving in the breeze, the sunshine kissing his silver hair, who for hours, amid incalculable danger and surrounded by death on every hand, stood, as he had often stood on the training fields of Bedford, and cheered his men with a smile on his lips and a flash in his proud fearless eyes. That was James Clark. It was what we expected of him. He had taught us to expect it. Day by day since, months before, we had first entered into action, by an example of heroism bordering almost on recklessness he had led us to place that confidence in him which no power on earth could have shaken.

It had always been one of the traits of his life most surcharged with pathos, his strange love for the championship of lost causes. One of his most intimate friends has said that he was always ready to die in the last ditch for a

lost cause, and was ever willing to join with you in laughing at himself for doing so. It was the outcome of his generous chivalrous soul. No one who knew him could imagine Clark in league with the strong against the weak. It was a semi-tragedy that such a perfect knight should have lived in this era—in an earlier one he would have found that ideals such as his received a higher face-value: and yet it was a blessing, for in the light of his manhood most of us may learn, if we will, exactly what are the things that matter.

And it was strangely appropriate that at the hour he died the cause in which he fought appeared to be well-nigh lost.

Against the shattered decimated British ranks were hurled masses of German soldiery, and it seemed that in all human probability the gate of Ypres was won. Clark was not to live to see the —— Brigade perform one of the miracles of this war, for when evening fell the British line was as the morning had found it. But he fell, in death, as so often in life, gallantly fighting what was apparently a lost and hopeless battle.

We were lining a muddy ditch in an open field when he was killed. Ten minutes before, a large shell had burst almost on top of us and the concussion had stunned and dazed him badly. In vain I pled with him to leave the field and crawl down to the dressing-station for a rest. It always evoked the same reply and the well-known smile, "If you can stay by me, my boy, I can stay by you."

. . . A blinding crash, a fierce scorching heat, the heavens reeling and the whole earth in darkness, a voice which seemed to come from far away, "The Colonel's killed,"—and I remember no more.

. . . . . .

Thus the warrior won his rest, while his "bairns," as he used to call his men, wrestled with hell. No member of the 9th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders can ever look back upon that day with any other feeling save high pride and thankfulness; and names such as Kenneth James Campbell who, through a hurricane of shells and bullets, wheeled his machine-gun on a wheel-barrow over two

hundred yards of open ground, calmly, as if on parade, placed the gun in position, and then, dazed and blinded by a gas-shell, continued at his post until he was killed—names such as his and that of Robert Scott Findlay of Boturich, ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν and bravest of the brave, will never be forgotten while Ben Lomond stands above her waters.

. . . . . .

I saw the colonel next and for the last time as he lay at the dressing-station. He was in no way disfigured, but seemed like a wearied soldier fast in a dreamless sleep. The proud strong face which in life had never blushed for shame, in death was turned fearlessly towards its Maker. James Clark looked splendid in life: he looked grand in death. "He was a great gentleman," said one of his officers softly, as together we looked our last on the face we had learned to love so well. And let that be his epitaph—none worthier could be spoken. Great-hearted, tender, courteous, true, far away where the violets blossom and the spring flowers

are filling the world with new hope and life, beneath a wooden cross fashioned by his men, all that is mortal of James Clark awaits the resurrection of the just.

(5.)

Not long ago, in the quiet of a Sabbath eventide I walked among the gardens of the house he loved. A great quiet was over the world . . . far away in the village nestling in the blue hazy valley the twilight bells pealed for evening worship—the sweet notes fell like a benediction on the soul. Through the trees the towers and turrets of the stately castle showed white against the golden sunset. And as I listened, the whispering leaves told me their holy secret, that this fretful pain-racked world is not the abiding place of our souls for ever.

I felt so happy as I listened. . . .

Among the undergrowth a burn trickled softly, and as I heard it, remembering some lonely graves far away, my heart was filled with a perfect peace: and I pray that at the last, as

they who sleep therein were able, so may I be able to say the words which that burn was singing as it wimpled to the sea:

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word:

For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,

Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.

THE NEW GETHSEMANE

THE NEW GETHSEMANE*

(1.)

ANOTHER year of it begun! another year of hell let loose! another year holding in its folded hands such terrible possibilities for us, nationally and individually, that our shrinking hearts dare not dwell upon them even for a moment—here we are upon its threshold. And the last twelve months have not been without their lesson, for we have learned at least this—that the best way to enter this new year of war is upon our knees. The vast concourse in S. Paul's on that 4th of August was indicative of a fact as striking as it is unique—a nation brought to its senses. Amid the filth, the misery, the slaughter of the year that is dead, there yet remains one thing which we may be thankful for, and it is this—that it has brought us at last

* Written on the occasion of the Service of Solemn Intercession in S. Paul's Cathedral on the 4th of August, 1915, being the anniversary of the Declaration of War.

face to face with something which all the sophistries of modern intellectualism cannot explain away, and which all the moral narcotics of fancy religions can never satisfy or ameliorate. The ordeal of fire has been for no class or section of the community; it has been sweeping, appalling in its universality. War is no longer for the paid armies; it has become the daily work of an Empire struggling frantically for its life. Here and now in this day of Armageddon the lust and greed of war have lost their place, and the cry, pathetic in its realism, rings through the length and breadth of a land, suddenly awakened by the horror of a freedom, a liberty, a religion, threatened with worse than extinction—"For God and the King!" And suddenly death itself becomes ennobled, and the grave is gilded with a radiant light. The truth of sacrifice, never properly understood though preached through the ages of two thousand years suddenly has broken on our minds, like the sun bursting through the fleecy clouds of spring.

It is only in the light of the doctrine of sacrifice that one can keep one's reason. If

we dethrone it from our hearts just now; if we are to believe that the world will not eventually be the purer and the better for the blood of our bravest and best so freely shed; if we are to believe, as some would have us believe, that the ultimate effect of the struggle will be brutalising rather than spiritualising; if, in short, we do not apply the doctrine of sacrifice, comprising, as it does, the fundamental, that not one drop of blood has been spilled but will water something of beauty yet to be born, that no suffering has been borne, that no agony has been endured by the men in the trenches, but what has had its influence in drawing the world on to a higher platform—if we do not believe this, if we do not behave in our daily life and conduct as if we believed this—we are leaving, so far as we ourselves are concerned, a world of broken stricken hearts, wallowing in a slough of tears, without hope, without faith, without life, without anything.

It is the only belief possible if the whole world is not to become hysterical and lose its head—the sacrifice of the best for the worst. It is of our best we must give, else the sacrifice

will not avail. That idea has ever stirred consciously or sub-consciously in the mind of man, primitive or matured. It was because it presented itself so strongly to their dim untutored souls that the Indian chiefs of old deemed it necessary to throw their first born child over the wild falls of Niagara. It had to be their best—a sacrifice to something unknown that it might be induced to be favourable to them, and that they might be raised and bettered here or hereafter. And that vague conception has lived through the ages, perfected on the cross of Calvary, where the highest holiest manhood was immolated that the lower might be lifted into fellowship with His perfection.

There has been no great movement in history but what has been effected by sacrifice; there has been no upheaval of existing conditions towards the amelioration of suffering or the betterment of humanity but what has been brought about by sacrifice; there has been no life worth anything at all in the annals of the race but what has been from start to finish a prolonged and ungrudging series of sacrifices.

Darkness has never given place to light, doubt to faith, bad to better, but what the sacrifice of the very best has been required towards its consummation. That which has ever gone forth to seek and to save, to do and to endure, to raise the fallen, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to roll this earth a little nearer to heaven, has been the free spirit of sacrifice. That which gives the necessary conditions to the ethical basis of our civilisation is sacrifice. That which is the cement of the Home is love, and the girder of the State is patriotism, or, in other words, the sacrificial spirit.

It has been a necessary adjunct to evolution; and what in this present-day turmoil seems cataclysmal if measured in terms of generations, becomes intellectually manageable if by the eye of faith one can bring one's self to view it in terms of the evolution of the universe, and regard it in the larger perspective of æons. It is, after all—it must be—towards the higher civilisation of man. As the tribe gave place to the larger community and it in turn developed into the conception of the State; as in our own country our various divisions and

territorial sub-sections have become fused in one imperial whole, and in their fusion civil wars and intertribal discord and bloodshed have passed into forgetfulness; so too, perhaps, the ultimate fruits of the present conflict will be towards a European consolidation, territorial and ethnical, tending towards the decrease of rival nationalities and a broader basis of life, towards a better international understanding and a grander moral outlook. While being the utmost contradiction of the words spoken in 1899 by old M. de Staal in his closing speech as President of the Hague Peace Conference, the carnage and slaughter at present overwhelming Europe are at the same time in a sense the fulfilment of his prophecy. And blessed is he who, with faith unshaken and hope undimmed, can, amid the clash of arms and shouts of battling men, see in this miasma of the bedraggled and broken hopes of centuries "the opening of the new perspectives for the good of humanity, and be able to cast his eyes into the brightness of the future."

It is only by holding to this, it is only by believing that our precious dead have not given

their lives in vain, that in the darkness can our groping hands find God. And only in this spirit can the nation in its valley of humiliation remember that lonely Man on a Cross Who turned the shameful sign of His degradation into the hope of man's redemption; and, remembering, come to realise that be he common soldier or officer, a man's life-blood sprinkled freely of his heart for his fellowmen in the mud of Flanders, transforms a trench into an holy altar.

It has all been a terrible soul-searching experience and it certainly has achieved this—it has taught us individuals to know the number of our days, how weak we are. The day that dear boy passed from the old home—you remember that day, reader—looking so strong and handsome in his khaki, his face radiant and happy, his laugh clear and ringing, we realised that there was no use any longer trying to face it out alone. There is no individual, however depraved, who does not at some time in his history stand on the doorway of eternal things, who does not find himself suddenly face to face with the unknowable. For most of us that

moment came when he who was dear to us as life itself went forth to fight for his country. And in the aching emptiness of our hearts, in our love, in our loneliness, in those days when something went wrong with the mails and the letters ceased, in those awful hours when the newspapers flamed with tales of horrors past imagining somewhere near where he was, how we longed and yearned to see him once again—if only for a moment to have him near us; to see that smile once more, to hear his laugh again. It was then, with a wondrous realisation, that we found that there was access to him, that there was a way to his heart through that divine love which obliterates space and time; and that we at home and he in the trenches could have that communion of spirit which is higher than all earthly converse, truer than all finite intercourse. We came to understand that touch was not the only condition of ecstasy. And at last we learned the inner meaning of those words which from our childhood we had babbled, nor sought nor wished to know any more of them than that they hailed from the Apostles' Creed—

I believe in the communion of Saints.

A bishop said the other day that what we had wanted before the war was to acquire more faith. That bishop was utterly wrong. What we had wanted was not to acquire more faith, but just to acquire any faith at all. We were mostly of a category who for very boredom would read our journals upside down half a dozen times a day, who would be outraged were we termed anything other than Christian, yet who never gave a thought to the stars and to Him who telleth the number thereof and calleth them by their names. But it was that boy in the trenches who made us find our soul—and in the Gethsemane of our travail during these long days of anxious waiting and these longer nights when sleep would not come, we determined, half shyly, half in spite of ourselves, to pray more, to work more, to read less, and to prattle a great deal less. We learned the blessedness of those who know the secret of the most perfect religion—to believe God *for* someone—simply because they must. And O that never to be forgotten day!—have you experienced it,

my reader?—when the telegram came which veiled the sun and smothered the earth in darkness, when all your eyes could see was the vision of his still pale face, quiet in death far away; when your dulled ears could hear nothing but the sound of his voice—stilled for ever—echoing down the golden years of childhood; when your hopes lay dead, your dreams shattered, your life's ideals choked in dust and ashes; when all that faced you was hopeless unutterable despair; when there was nothing left at all, nothing, absolutely nothing! What dreams and hopes and visions you had centred in that young life. What a future you had pictured for him as he climbed the ladder of his profession. You had seen him, bearing your name, crowned with honour and success. You had been prepared for some disappointment, certainly. You had faced the possibility of his not fulfilling all your expectations, perhaps. But that it should all end like this! . . . God of mercy! you had never bargained for that.

And for a time faith was swallowed up in doubt, and the very face of God was hidden. All religion was but a worn-out platitude. Yet

it had to be borne, that awful cross laid on your shoulders—and you suddenly found that you could not bear it alone. It was then that on your darkened mind there broke the still sweet voice of One Who said that He had carried this poor world's burden and was willing and ready to help you to carry yours. He it was who found you wandering and hopeless on the sun-scorched highway of life and took you by the hand and led you by the rivers of peace and in the shadow of the trees of healing. And you spoke to Him of your dead boy and He understood so well—for He had wept beside a grave and had drunk of the cup of human grief. You told Him of all your dreams and hopes and how they had faded, and of the flowers of your life and how they were withered and dead. And you said that your heart was bruised and bleeding, and you were so weary and could find no rest. In your misery you were sometimes rebellious and wayward, but He always dealt so gently with you; He never rebuked you for your tears, but bore with you and wept with you—for He could understand. And He whispered to your heart of where your boy was,

where is no more sorrow, neither shall there be any more pain: and where your treasure was, there your heart went also.

And thus in Gethsemane, you found—God.

. . . . . .

What is true of the individual has held also with the nations. They know the stakes of their conflict, and the game is worth while. They have seen their vision and are following the gleam. It needs no poet to visualise the picture of humanity creeping back through the blood-red mist humbled, yet ennobled, to the feet of God. France—light-hearted laughter-loving France—suddenly plunged, all unwitting and unprepared, into the swirling vortex of carnage, rapine and slaughter, is returning to the altars she so long despised. Britain, too common-sense to be atheistical and much too self-complacent to be truly religious, has nevertheless awakened to a spiritual activity hitherto unprecedented. Russia—vast silent Russia—has forged in the hour of her travail yet another golden chain to bind her piety the closer to the cross. Belgium, poor little Belgium, with her

faith undimmed amidst her desolation, has proved herself the *Lux in Tenebris* of a darkened world.

(2.)

In the hush of solemn expectancy we gathered that day within the temple of England's love. Through painted windows, through the crimson of the martyrs and the vestments of the saints, the slanting sunbeams fell softly on the grey cold walls, kissing their solid sternness into smiling beauty. The great dome was soft with quiet shadow. A holy stillness pervaded the atmosphere, sinking deep into the heart. In a never-ending procession they came, from the office and the club, from the quiet of the country-side and the bustle of the market-place, high and low, rich and poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, the widow and the orphan, the prince and the peasant, the weary and the broken in heart—thronging chancel, nave and aisles, all sorts and conditions of men, the epitome of a nation's life. It was all simple, and therefore all natural. With no processional

pageantry the white-robed choir and clergy filed silently to their appointed places, archbishop and bishop, canon and priest. Then a great stillness. Suddenly from afar came stealing on the ear the sound of cheering. It swelled like the roar of a mighty tempest, sweeping round the church like the sough of the wind in the cliff-caverns of the west. Over the vast crowd within the cathedral swept a wave of expectancy, and even as the breeze over the autumn cornfields the serried rows of heads leaned forward to catch a glimpse of the passage from the north door. . . . At last he came, that simple lonely man whom a whole Empire adores, walking erect like a soldier, yet with his head slightly bent, and his face a little drawn with anxiety and care. Slowly he passes to his place, his Queen and retinue behind him, and sinks on to his knees. Soft the strains of the organ creep through the frescoed aisles, and the vast crowd rises to its feet. The nation enters its Gethsemane. . . .

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.

. . . . . .

A sight worth seeing, this; King and princes, statesmen and ecclesiastics, richly-dressed women and women in rags, kneel before the altar of God, each with the same vision before the eye—that cup which is held before them, that they, weak and powerless, may have to drink. And through the strains from the golden-piped organ, through chant and hymn and litany, there throbbed the unspoken wail of anguished souls, "O let this cup pass from me—let it pass from me." Multitudes in this church have already faced their Gethsemane—there is nothing so certain as that all will have to face it before the bugles sound the peace. There is not one soul here that does not realise the fact, and there is not one soul that is not almost afraid to pray. From a civilisation reeling and staggering on its foundations, from the wreckage of our loveliest hopes, from the brink of the grave, from the bitterness of tears, from the terrible certainty that all we have faced is as nothing to what will come—what words can the dazed stunned mind of mortal man frame with his lips to meet this?

"God! help us to be brave, help us to be

true; to be strong enough for our burden and brave enough for our cross!"

And that is all we dared in our hearts to say.

. . . . . .

O be favourable and gracious unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.

As if on the wings of the sweet childish voices I was transported to another cathedral, within whose charred and crumbling ruins I had stood not so many weeks before. All around it the city, once fair and beautiful, is but a desolation. From the wrecked bullet-spattered houses that encircle the once lovely sanctuary, the few Belgian people who have clung amid all danger to their devastated homes with a devotion passing all belief, look with patient wistful eyes upon the holy house wherein their fathers worshipped, now burned up with fire. The great stone-vaulted roof has been smashed to pieces; walls are falling, strong pillars are bent and mis-shapen like giants in agony; the painted windows and priceless

mural frescoes have disappeared; the flagged floor of nave and aisles is full of gaping holes and littered with debris; the altar of God is but a shapeless mass of stones, plaster and lumber; the great organ in its gallery, mute and silent, stands rent and wounded—its music hushed for ever.

It was not one chance shell that perpetrated this foul act of damnable vandalism. It was not one shell, nor thirty, nor three hundred. It was a deliberate bombardment, fostered by the fiercest hate that has ever besmirched the annals of a civilised warfare; a bombardment not the least bit retarded or moderated by the fact that upon the great square tower there was flying the flag of the Red Cross of human brotherhood—that sign respected all the world over save by the blood-glutted maniacs of Prussian Militarism—and that the hallowed courts were filled with the wounded, the sick, the dying. All over the land it is the same—pitiful ruins of battered churches and deserted homesteads that send up their inarticulate cry of misery to the feet of eternal justice. And on our knees in S. Paul's, beneath the great

dome which seemed to cover us like a mother sheltering her children, we thanked God that we had at least been spared that.

O be favourable and gracious unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.

Yet there is something left in that crucified land—hung on its cross that others might be saved—that all the shells of the armed hosts of the world can never destroy. For in the darkness, faith is living still. Not long ago I walked from the rosy blush of a fragrant dawn into the cool soft shadows of a village church in Flanders. Shells had done their best to destroy it, but within its lacerated walls the worship of a pious people still ascended as the morning sacrifice, although the village itself was shattered and the paneless windows of the tiny church were stuffed with sacking. The interior presented a strange sight. At the east end, where the sanctuary light glimmered red through the dimness, an aged priest, bent with the burden of his years, was solemnising the great rite of his faith. The crimson glow of the altar lamp and the gleam of the flickering

tapers fell caressingly on his snow-white hair and richly embroidered cope, as with slow and reverent tones he chanted the office of the Mass. A few villagers, dirty and ragged, knelt in awed reverence before the altar rails. And not four yards away, scattered over the nave of the church, a company of artillery-men lolled about on pallets of straw, cleaning their harness and smoking their cheap foul-smelling tobacco, completely at home in their strange unwonted billet. And as the censer rose and fell in the hand of the little acolyte, ever through the chatter of the soldiers' voices, through the jingling of the accoutrements of war, through the angry growl and rumble of the cannon, sounded the musical voice of the aged priest, soft yet persistent, as from the tumult and discord of warring humanity he prayed for the peace of the whole world and the salvation of the souls of men.

Ah, faith is living still! I sat among the falling walls of Ypres Cathedral. Not a sound broke the silence borne of hopelessness and ruin. A piece of plaster fell, perchance—that was all: or occasionally a rat

scurried among the lumber heaps which once constituted the sum and crown of centuries of devotion and work. Suddenly came footsteps stumbling over the piled up lime and mortar. A little girl appeared, slowly moving up the nave—a little child whose eyes were radiant with innocency and whose face was shining with peace. Among the rubbish that littered the broken chancel steps that messenger of light knelt down to pray, and on her little breast she made the sign of man's salvation. . . . The rainbow is still in the cloud!

Were I a great painter I would paint that scene—it is the personification of Belgium, kneeling with a child-like faith, her face still turned towards the east, amid the ruins of her love and hope. . . .

O be favourable and gracious unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.

(3.)

We learned the power of prayer that day in S. Paul's. Men may argue of the illogicality of prayer in the light of a belief in a supreme

omniscient Power. It may or it may not be so. But if faith and works are to be judged by their fruits, then the power of prayer was manifested that day in a miraculous degree. As the stately intonation proceeded, as intercessions were offered and prayer made for men and nations, a new look came into the faces of the worshipping multitude. The weeping women in black dried their tears, the pale set faces of men became flushed and strong with the enthusiasm of intensest conviction. The light that never was on sea or land gleamed in their eyes. Over the vast crowd brooded that strange sense of immortality—indescribable, indefinable, that one discovers in the trickle of falling water, in the dew-drop on the rose at evening, in the breath of the dawn, in the rustle of leaves, in the moaning of the sea, in the happy laughter of little children. It was there that day—definite yet impalpable, around us, above us, beneath us. And feeling it, we prayed.

O Almighty Lord God, the Father and Protector of all that trust in Thee: we commend to Thy fatherly goodness the men who through perils of war are serving this nation . . . be

Thou their strength when they are set in the midst of so many and great dangers. Make all bold through death or life to put their trust in Thee, who art the only giver of victory, and canst save by many or by few.

The words rang through the sanctuary; and before one's eyes there rose the picture of those weary men on whose faithfulness to duty hangs the safety of our national existence. These are they who have gone down into hell that we may be free. Where the crack of the rifles and the roar of trench mortars and artillery are never silent, these men are living from day to day in an atmosphere rendered foul by the loathsome stench of slime and mud. It is all over the land, this smelling ooze: everywhere seems the same—mud, black stinking mud. And here in cellars and trenches, in dug-outs and holes in the earth, strong brave men are fighting and waiting and dying, daily doing their bit, ungrudgingly and uncomplainingly, as oft their fathers did of old that their children might shout the songs of liberty. Worn, weary, nerve-racked, through month after month of

danger, depression, anxiety, they are still the same — indomitable, trustful, cheerful. Only the lines at the corners of the mouth, and the drawn look in the dull tired eyes, tell the story to the observant watcher which would never be told by complaining lips.

During the hours of daylight the strain is not so severe unless the trenches are shelled. But it is the long hours of darkness that tell upon the strongest nerves. All night long no one is allowed to sleep, and each man sits and waits and waits, not knowing what the next moment may bring. Ever and anon the whispered warning, "Stand to arms!" thrills the heart with a strange wild excitement. Throughout the night the star-shells flare up and the incessant rattle of rifle-fire continues; and the weary watchers in the trenches wait with their gleaming bayonets fixed, peering into the fearsome darkness and yearning for the first faint glimmer of the early dawn. It is an almost holy moment, the time of the dawning of the day in the trenches. As over the parapets and sand-bags and the mud-flats covered with shell-holes filled with smelling water, the soft,

luminous light streaks the sky with silver and green, showing forth the dim outlines of traverse and parados, barbed-wire entanglements and ditches, of steely bayonet and worn haggard faces, it seems as if a sigh of relief rises from a weary humanity, thanking God for the light and for the day. The dawn bringeth healing in its wings, for now men may sleep, and, save for the watchful sentries, they huddle down on the mud-floors like tired children trying to win the forgetfulness of slumber. And the night returns and the strain renews itself, and by day and night these faithful watchers keep their vigil until their spell is over: and in the blackness of the night the relief parties steal up amid the flying bullets to take their place in the terrible monotony. Week by week it is going on, this strange existence of cellars, trenches, dug-outs; this weird fantastic world of unkempt wearied men. One lived it all over again as the kneeling priest cried to God for these men, that He would cover their heads in the day of battle, and hide them beneath the shadow of His wings.

. . . . . .

The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God,
And there shall no torment touch them.

The white-surpliced minister prayed on.

Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord . . . we give Thee hearty thanks for our brothers who have laid down their lives for their country; beseeching Thee that it may please Thee, of Thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, and to hasten Thy Kingdom. . . .

Looking up, my gaze was fascinated by a row of blinded soldiers. Their sightless eyes were staring straight before them. On their faces was a strange unearthly look as of those who see beyond the veil. I wondered then, as I wonder now, if to their darkened vision there came the spiritual insight, keener than all reasoning and stranger than all logic, which can pierce the mists of earthly things. I have met old men in the mountains and glens of the west who told me that when the mortal senses failed, the

senses of the soul awoke to greater life. And one told me, years ago, that it was only when his eyes waxed dim and his ears grew dull that he could see the Little Folk as they danced in the shadowy glens at night time, and could hear the music which the soft winds whisper, and know the love-songs of the moonbeams as they kissed the dimpled waters into silver. I feel that these sightless soldiers in S. Paul's saw clearly the vast congregation of the holy dead, the spirit armies of those who for our sakes have fought and bled and died, and still with greater power are fighting for us and praying for us and leading us on to victory. I know that they were present that day although invisible, that they have put off their blood-stained khaki and have put on the armour of light, that the new song of victory is in their mouths, that their prayers were mingled with ours, that their hymns were joined to ours. For that dear friend of mine whose earthly body sleeps in Flanders but whose spirit is with the winged hosts of heaven, was very near me then, and spoke to me, and helped me, and made me brave again; and told me, with an assurance

stronger than all faith or finite knowledge, of a meeting which awaits us beyond the shadows and the tears of this dying world.

We owe this debt to those of our race whom the reaper of war has garnered, that their lives shall not have been laid down in vain. It is because of deeds done in the darkness, unhonoured and unknown, which make the tales of Marathon and Thermopylae fade into insignificance as the mist flees before the breath of dawn, that these lonely mounds that face towards the rising of the sun have multiplied, are multiplying. For all over Flanders have grown up like forests the wooden crosses of the blessed dead. They are the sunbeams of hope amid the gloom. In field and coppice, by trench and hamlet, in the valleys and on the wind-swept hillside, these gardens of resurrection are scattered far and near, bearing their silent yet eloquent testimony to those who, for the love of country and the cause of the weak, counted their lives as naught and had no fear to die. And to those who rest therein we owe this—that no peace shall be even moment-

arily considered unless by its terms its shall claim the uttermost farthing of retribution for Europe's agony, and for ninety thousand British graves.

Though poor will be the harvest that Belgium will yield from out her battered and muddy wastes, yet in these silent mounds she holds a golden grain whereof the harvest will surely be plenteous and immortal in the hearts of mankind. For though the fathers went forth weeping, yet they bore their precious seed, and by their graves shall their children come again rejoicing. The sheaves they bear will be the harvest of a rejuvenated Europe, of a purified and ennobled humanity.

(4.)

From the steps of the High Altar the bishop has raised his hand to bless the people. His clear voice has imbued us with a stronger spirit. "Give us grace to fulfil our daily duties with a sober diligence." That is to be the key-note of the coming year—a sober diligence. That is to be our watchword, rather than carping

criticism and emotional hysteria. And then, refreshed and strengthened, we rose to our feet and sent our hymn of triumph pealing in a mighty chorus:

Through the night of doubt and sorrow,
Onward goes the pilgrim band,
Singing songs of expectation,
Marching to the promised land.
Clear before us through the darkness
Gleams and burns the guiding light,
Brother clasps the hand of brother,
Stepping fearless through the night.

Upward it went and ever upward, soaring in exultation—the voice of a people's hope, surcharged with patience, with fortitude, with fearlessness; past dome and cross, past firmament and sky, upward to the very feet of God. . . .

As we moved along the crowded aisles towards the door it seemed as if from the gilded reredos the figure of the crucified Christ looked down upon us with infinite compassion; and we felt that one day indeed, far-off perhaps, but yet at last, He will change our songs of expectation into the new song of victorious

realisation, when in the cloudless noontide where the mysteries of pain and sorrow will be unravelled, He will give to widowed hearts and yearning spirits to know that

gladness of rejoicing
On the far eternal shore.

(5.)

Gethsemane all over again! It came upon one like the shock of a plunge into cold water. These young men, stalwart and strong, resplendent in the garb of the civilian, who graced the streets with their presence as we wended our homeward way—whence were they? Mostly young men they were, and the sight of it made the heart weary. Their numbers unfortunately will not substantiate the belief that they were all engaged in Government work—there were too many of them. It is an extraordinary problem this. Is it the want of realisation, or is it a spirit unknown in our past—the spirit of cowardice? In charity, let us believe it is the former.

I remember, my reader, a Belgian woman's face—a peasant woman—and on it were scars, livid weals, where a German officer had struck her with his riding whip and felled her to the ground. And while she lay at his feet, screaming in pain, he struck and struck her again. That awful face will haunt me to my dying day—and it might have been your mother, my friend, or your sweetheart or your sister. I remember of how a sergeant-major of a famous regiment was found crucified in a wood, left as food for the carrion—he might have been your father, my friend, or your brother. I remember how women have been foully outraged and how little children and priests have been butchered with the most appalling savagery—and these might have been your dear ones, my friend. I remember standing amid desecrated churches, silent ruined homes, desolated villages, churchyards where even the dead were not allowed to rest in peace, but whose holy ground was rent and torn with shells, stately cathedrals and ancient homes of learning now but battered wrecks and falling in corruption; I remember wasted fields and

gardens of beauty now but a wilderness; I remember thousands of my countrymen's nameless graves; I remember tales of barbarity perpetrated on the innocent and defenceless which made the blood run cold—and it might have been your country, my friend.

If, by reason of some higher logic than ordinary minds may grasp, men could reconcile with the pure animal instinct of self-preservation (to put it at its lowest), the belief that petty self-interests and a few more shillings a week are of greater import than that the bestial monsters who were the perpetrators of these abominations should be trampled and humbled in the dust—then there would be no use arguing further. But if not, if in them there glimmers the spark of reason, I cannot conceive how they can forget that Man whose disciples, when He knelt in His Gethsemane, could not watch with Him one brief hour—but slept: and, forgetting, help to re-enact the scene, in that their country, which depends on them, while crying to God in its agony finds them sleeping. The world has sunk very low in these days and human nature has reached depths of depravity never

before experienced; but I would be exceedingly reluctant to specify as to which were the worse —the brutal Prussian in his unspeakable atrocities, or the young Briton who will witness his Empire and all that the heart of the civilised earth holds dear struggling in desperate battle for its life, and will not lift his little finger to help.

August of 1914 has long passed, and compulsion is in the air and has virtually come, but the stigma remains and the roll of honour is closed. It was open to us to win this war with an immortal vindication of the principles of democratic liberty about which we love to prate, to win it on the voluntary system. No glory of the past would have compared with the glory that would have been ours in that day—but it is not to be. A section of the community has seen to that, a section which will be branded for ever. And when the fight is over, the country will not forget.

In all the pages of history there is but one parallel instance to the apathy and neglect of our present-day shirkers—and that was when Judas sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver.

For the man of military age who was medically sound and could be spared from the exercise of his daily duties in civil life there was one, and only one, course open in honour and respect. Every consideration has been shewn, every justice has been given—a scheme formulated whose statutes were equable, honest and broad. And it has all failed. The brutish mind knew it not, neither did the fool understand.

Truly this nation has knelt in its Gethsemane.

It has been evident from the start that this war will be won by superiority in men. It has also been evident that this war we must win if Galilee is to conquer Corsica. And whoso at this dark hour has shirked or is shirking his responsibility, however burdensome it may be, is far more than a contemptible traitor to his country and a disgrace to his blood—he is striking a blow at the civilisation of JESUS CHRIST, and is driving in his nail to crucify Him afresh.

THE CLACHAN OF THE WEST

THE CLACHAN OF THE WEST

Green wind from the green-gold branches, what is the song you bring?
What are all songs for me, now, who no more care to sing?
Deep in the heart of Summer, sweet is life to me still,
But my heart is a lonely hunter that hunts on a lonely hill.

—FIONA MACLEOD.

(I.)

IT is of the Clachan of the West that I love to dream in the firelight—far away from the noise of war. I see such wonderful things in the glowing embers, old memories rise in them and fade away, old faces smile from them, such sweet sad smiles. And even my dreams are sad, for everything seems passing, passing into forgetfulness.

It hath great beauty, this Clachan of the West—here dwelleth the loveliness of mountain and loch, moor and field and crystal hill-stream, and clustering woods which shelter the silent clachan as it sleeps in the shadow of the pine-clothed hill on the narrow plain which runs

down to the blue waters. But to me it is a village of shades. It has been one continual process of change from the earliest days of my remembrance. My first recollections are of a row of red-tiled cottages, embowered in shrubbery and creepers, with flower-decked untrammelled gardens straggling out into the middle of the picturesque ill-kempt road. The red roofs were green with moss and silvered with lichen woven by the winds. Every cot had walls of purest white, and a few boasted fences round their garden plots—real old-world fences, with the bark still on them, dark-green and grey with fungi.

Now the tiny street is transformed. It is faultlessly neat. Every house is regular, uniform, twentieth-century. Gardens no more wander in rich profusion; they are enclosed in irreproachable fences of careful make. The smoke no longer rises from the old roof-holes but from square compact chimneys. All the red tiles have gone save from one little cottage, the last of its kind. It stands close by the old God's-acre, a little back from the village street, on a patch of verdant grass. Behind it,

concealed in shrubberies, a burn gurgles its liquid music. Against the wall there grows the thornless rose of Sharon. Great yew trees overshadow it, and it is crumbling and mouldering in decay. . . . I looked through the broken window the other day—the ceiling had fallen in and the whole place was befouled. She has been dead for some years, the old Highland woman who lived there.

A century ago not a word of English was spoken in that Clachan of the West. To-day the old language of the Gael is almost dead and only lingers with one or two who will only relinquish it with the breath of life. A brief century has worked the change and scattered the mystic Celtic atmosphere with the rude blasts of modern life and civilisation. But to me the saddest change of all is that all the old faces of my childhood are gone—it is a clachan of the dead. With one or two exceptions all the faces of long ago have faded away. One by one the fathers of the clachan have heard the voices calling from beyond the shadows, and laying down their burdens have crept away to rest.

The world grows very full of memories and ghosts as the years pass over us, and every corner of that clachan has its memory and every nook its ghost. And sometimes in the long summer gloaming or by the winter firelight I can see them still so clearly, the spirits of the former years before the world grew old.

(2.)

One of the most picturesque sights of the clachan was the old mill, as it stood hard by the clear mountain stream where it surges past over its rocky bed to join the still waters of the loch. Mantled with moss and fern and enshrouded in a bower of trees it stood below the little clachan on the hill and formed the favourite haunt of the artist and a welcome rest to the tourist. Here in the long summer afternoons the old grey pile resounded with the songs and laughter of the visitors who were wont to picnic beneath the shadow of its walls, while the rustling leafy boughs swayed and whispered in the embrace of the gentle breeze and the slumbering loch shimmered in the sunshine. But

now it is gone. And when summer again enfolds the woods in her robe of green, as in former years the wanderers will come in their thousands from the great city of the west and will wend their way as of yore to where the old mill stood hard by the long brae over the hill. To them the changed aspect of the place will afford but the subject for a compassionate and disinterested sigh at the passing of the old order, for they could not love it as we loved it. But to us it is an abiding sorrow.

It stood idle for many years and we used to play about the quaint wooden wheel when we were children; and even then it was moss-grown and beginning to decay. How we loved that shaded temple of the woodland nymphs, so all-pervaded with subtle fragrance, so eloquent of peace! And how we weaved like some invisible tissue a web of romance around it. Of course in the pale moonlight the mountain fairies danced strange fantastic steps upon the shadowed slopes, and elfin figures moved to the purling music of the crystal stream. We believed it, and why not? It made the world so fascinating, so sweet. And now we believe

no more in mountain fairies, for we see the world through eyes dimmed with the corroding influence of the years, and it seems so mean and sordid, so cunning and base—this beautiful earth that the good God made—only we fail to realise that it is we ourselves who make it so. But in these far-off days life was sweet and the echo of angelic music seemed to be as a spirit that all invisible pervaded the universe. For our little hearts were pure and very near the throbbing heart of the Source of all things. And it seemed to us as if the spot were a haunt of the mermaids by day, and for hours we would gaze into the transparent depths of the pools for a glimpse of them. I must confess I never saw one, but perchance some day I yet may catch a fleeting glimpse of the vision of loveliness as she combs her hair in the tranquil depths of the alabaster caves.

One day a little friend came to us from the grey-castled city of the east; and after we grew weary of tobogganning in a tea-tray down a steep grassy slope at the end of the verdant lawn, I proposed that we should go to the mill and watch for mermaids. How well I remember

the winsome wee face enhaloed in a large befrilled sunbonnet tied with pink ribbons, and the blue eyes looking wonderingly into mine as she queried, "What is a mermaid?" For she was from that great world which is so much occupied with itself that it cannot think of mermaids or anything else.

So along the avenue of old gnarled plane trees we romped, away past the dark wood-skirted bay to where the old mill stood. And lying flat upon our faces, with bated breath and eyes filled with tense excitement we peered into the green translucent pools, longing to see if only but for a moment the fair denizen of the watery cells. We gave it up after a while—the nymph must have been asleep. So we lay in the slanting shadows and watched the sunbeams gently kissing the silver waterfall into gold, as the stream fell in a cascade over the glistening rock like an endless lace-work of liquid jewels. In the neighbouring field the reaping-machine hummed and swished, and the far-off cries of the haymakers fell softly on the ear. The drone of the bees, busy on the perfume-dowered braes, filled the air with en-

chanting music. Out in the full blaze of the sunshine the deep loch reflected the sleeping hills in its tranquil waters domed with the blue immobile canopy of heaven. How near to the secret of the unseen were these two innocent little souls that day. For child-like innocence is the key that opens the everlasting door which defies the wisdom of the wise. She went away back to the great city; and that was many long years ago. I do not suppose she remembers that day now; for it is not easy to cherish the story of mermaids where the air resounds incessantly with the tramp of the battalions of humanity marching to they know not where.

How I loved that old mill-wheel. And it was as a friend to me. I told it my secrets and my little joys and quaint wee sorrows; and it seemed so sympathetic in its solemn silence that I almost made myself believe that I heard it speaking to me. After a while the wheel broke up and fell to pieces, but still we had the old mill and with it were content. And now it is gone. The old trees sigh in the wind and moan its requiem.

The solemn old fellows never seem to rustle

the same way now as they used to do when we were children. For in those days it seemed as if the low swish of the green branches was the whispering of the angels. But then, we believed in angels when we were young and foolish; and we were not afraid of the silent woods or the darkening moor, for we trusted the white guardians we heard of as we knelt at our mother's knee. They slumbered not neither were they ever weary in watching over the little ones. Yet the inevitable time came when the old home had to be left, with all its old-fashioned traditions and its curious lore, and I was packed off to sit at the feet of Gamaliel in an ancient university. And it is now but as the memory of a long-faded dream that July Graduation when the university was left for ever.

. . . . . .

It is about the end of July that in country parsonage and city office, in many a post of responsibility across the seas, in the room where the hand guides the destinies of empires, or where the isolated political officer upholds his

flag beneath the tropic skies, countless eyes are turned towards grey familiar college walls, and the old, old phrase comes over the lips once more, "It must be getting near the summer Graduation." And on the wings of dreams they live it over again, that great day of the long ago when they were crowned with their dower of learning, and set forth into the future so full of hopes and lofty ideals.

Many a man looks back on a fight well fought, and a glow warms his heart as he thinks that he for one has brought no shame on Alma Mater. But there is many a broken heart where old 'Varsity men—the men who have never got on to the rails in life—are pensively gazing back down the long white road of memory, to see it strewn with the wreckage of wasted years, shattered ideals, blasted hopes. For the one the day's work is the better for the vision of the past—for the other the cup of bitterness is sweetened just a trifle, and a ray of sunlight falls across the pathway; and that is always something.

It is a sight which, once seen, can never be forgotten—a Graduation Day. In the crowded

Hall there are those who will be the leaders of their generation. They are all there among that sea of faces—the great divines, the eminent lawyers, the leading politicians, the master minds that will rule the land twenty-five years hence. They are all there—the district commissioner, the counsel, the country parson, the subordinate officer, that goodly company which never emerge into the limelight but form the backbone of our national and imperial life. These are the men whom nobody ever hears of but who alone are indispensable—the puppets of the limelight are not.

And they are all there too—the coming failures; the men who at eventide will review their day's work — nothing attempted and nothing accomplished. What a mercy we cannot see the future! What a mercy it is that the veil is so dense that each and every eye in these rows of waiting expectant graduates is shining with a lovely hope, because it cannot see a pace ahead!

Every man is pressing forward in the confident expectation that he is going to conquer where others have always failed, that the world

which has spurned everybody else is at any rate going to hearken to him. What a mercy he cannot see! But it is good that those faces should beam so brightly even for a little while, for ere many years have passed the cheeks will be furrowed with pain and the eyes will have grown dull with care. How youth should thank God that we cannot see!

The spectacle that moved Butcher to eloquence and Blackie to tears does not leave unaffected the least emotional observer. I love that story of old Blackie—poor old Blackie whom the great world called mad, because he saw a vision which it could never see and dreamed strange dreams which it could never understand—who, as the long procession of students passed before him at a graduation ceremony, suddenly burst into tears and cried, "How grand, how grand! But how sad, O God, how sad!"

The ceremony is over, the quadrangles are left to the sparrows and the ghosts. Yet still groups linger about the hallowed precincts as if unable to tear themselves away. It is at this

moment that the full significance of life, with all its staggering solemnity, first rises up before the happy-go-lucky mind of the average student; his free careless college life is over, and he suddenly finds himself face to face with stern realities. He experiences again that strange feeling which seized his heart in an icy grip the day he first left home for school. He is now leaving the kindly protecting walls of his Alma Mater, and the great cold world lies open at his feet.

There is no more touching sight on graduation day than that which is so common that it passes all unnoticed—the little groups gathered at the quadrangle gates uttering the old, old formula ere their paths separate for ever, "Well, good-bye, old man—God bless you." This is the initiation into the real life of this throbbing old world, a world which is echoing everlastingly to the sob of sad farewells. He is a poor, poor creature who can stand unmoved and see these young souls going past so bravely, so trustfully into the brightness of life's morning, forth to their day's work and their disillusionment, till for each the shadows

lengthen and the curfew rings the fall of night.

Ah, what a blessing they could not see the future at the summer graduations of 1914. For four weeks later the tocsin sounded through Europe, and called in no uncertain tones for the manhood of the country to rally to the flag. And forth they went, the brave and the true, without a moment's hesitation; casting aside their prospects without regret they left the law-courts and the class-room, the office and the seats of learning, and went forth to fight for their country. And grander still, the priests left the altars of God, and putting off the cassock girded on the sword, and sallied forth to stand for Christ and the right, as in the days of old. There is a spirit about the cap and gown which none can understand save those who have trod the quiet courts of an ancient University, that spirit which enters into those who live and move and have their being amid the academic atmosphere—a spirit of honour, self-sacrifice, unflinching respect for duty. And amply have they shewn it. With one unanimity they turned, all the nation over, from the pursuits of peace and put them on their armour

to go forth to officer the British armies. Oxford and Cambridge are empty, Dublin is desolate, Edinburgh is but deserted halls and echoing quadrangles.

When I think of those among the men crowding the 'Varsity graduations of 1914 who have died in supremest sacrifice: when I think of those who have given up all to go to take their places, clergy who have left their calm and holy paths, men who have resigned government posts and lucrative positions, the innumerable multitude who have given up everything that the world could bestow to battle for righteousness: when I think of that dear boy, the earliest friend of my school-days, who sleeps so quietly where the seagulls wail over the deserted rocks of Gallipoli, his warfare accomplished, his wounds all healed; of his radiant youth crowned with brilliant athletic renown, of his bright and happy spirit which, God knows, we needed so much in this misery-stricken world, of the honoured name which he bore with a noble blameless heart, of his enthusiastic young life laid down so greatly, in the spirit of the Christ,

that another might live—when I think of these it seems as if the stars sang together the truth of immortality, and all the seas and winds were telling that God lives and is no lie!

. . . . . .

For two hundred years and more but one name has been connected with the old place, and all the clachan and all the county knew of MacNeilage of the Mill. A fine race they were, these MacNeilages; strong upright God-fearing Highlanders. And for two centuries they formed the leaven of righteousness in the parish, and for two centuries from father to son they toiled at the mill and wore an unsullied name. But modern life and progress have crushed out the country mill, and years ago the old mill in the Clachan of the West closed its doors for ever. Yet the old family dwelt on in the Mill House, till in the fulness of time the last MacNeilage was gathered to his fathers; and an old lichen-covered gravestone beneath the shadow of the ruined kirk was all that was left of the name of MacNeilage of the Mill. A little

burn flows past their resting-place singing its eternal song as down past the yew trees it courses over its white pebbles to the loch. The clachan clusters round the rusty iron gates of the graveyard, some of the houses crumbling in decay. All around rise the everlasting hills. Through the trees the great waters glimmer in the changing light. How silent it all is. Peace hath her dwelling here. And over the graves in that little God's-acre the snowdrops peep in spring, and in summer the birds carol without ceasing their hymns of love and hope. Here is a weather-beaten Celtic cross, the tomb of a Columban saint; there lies a Crusader under his great stone engraved with cross and sword. Together they lie, peer and peasant, pastor and people, nor wake they from their slumbers till all the stars shall fall. O these graves! What would the world be without them? For it is an old world and a weary world, and it is only the graves which keep its sad seared heart from breaking.

The short winter afternoon was drawing to a close when first I saw what was happening; and through the bare trees the snow-capped

mountains flushed pink in the glow of the waning day. But the richness of the sunset had no beauty for me that night; for the old mill was gone.

"It would be a bad day for old Peter MacNeilage, this same, sir," remarked Tearlach Ban, as he trudged homeward to his cottage. His voice was light, for he was not of our people, having come from the glens of another county; and he did not love the old mill as we loved it.

But Eachan, son of Murdo, stood at the door of his cottage, leaning heavily upon his stick because of the burden of his years, the last of the old people; and when I spoke to him of the old mill his voice shook with emotion as he answered me in the measured rhythmic cadences of those who speak the Gaelic tongue, for his heart was broken. That day, through a mist of tears, he watched the gangs of workmen as they steadily pursued the work of demolition, and they worked with that feverish energy which the destruction of an old landmark always seems to call forth: so before the onslaught of pick-axe and hammer the walls

fell low. But to Eachan it seemed as if his last friend were dead. And he told me his memories of the old days when he was a boy, and of the songs of the millers and the busy hours of the little clachan while the wheel churned the waters of the foam-flecked stream and the old mill throbbed with life and industry. And now it is gone. Yet I feel that in the years to come the memory of that sweet place will be with me in hours of fretful pain or of lonely weariness, and the rosy child-faces of the long-gone days will peer from the paneless windows, and their voices will peal as silver bells from a land that is very far off. One day they will sound louder and more clear and in their music the voices of the world will be hushed to rest; for the child-faces will be beckoning and calling to those unknown paths which lie beyond the encircling shadows.

So the world goes upon its course, and a new generation will arise in the Clachan of the West which knows not the old mill. But Eachan, son of Murdo, will sit where the torrent rushes down to the great waters and he will mourn as for a friend who is dead: so can

there be naught but sadness in his heart until he comes to die. And the night wind for ever sweeps moaning across the dark loch and sighs unceasingly around the dying clachan with the sobbing wail of desolation.

(3.)

In these days of war there has been much talk about angels and spirits and what-not, of heavenly bodies who aided our troops when in danger, of supernatural powers and miraculous interventions. So many have vouched for them and so many have denied, and it is hard to find a coherent statement on the subject. And but the other day I heard that a clergyman wrote to the daily press stating that the whole controversy was ridiculous in the extreme and was but the outcome of the phantasmagoria of excited imaginations. How he knows this I cannot tell, but he spoke like an oracle. But then so many people do speak in this wise, not from knowledge but from ignorance; as, for instance, another clergyman made a public

utterance that it was the trust and belief in creeds and dogma and churches that enabled most men to face death in the trenches unfalteringly and unflinchingly. I have served and fought in Flanders and seen divers types of men, but I never yet met one who died the better because of creeds or dogma or churches —but nearly all I found would die quite calmly and happily because of a new-born faith in God and in the Christ of Bethlehem—but that is quite another thing. We so often make this mistake, it is so easy. It was the mistake which rendered Voltaire so valueless — he confounded the Church with Christianity.

Now, while in certain preceding pages I have narrated stories which I have heard, I do not ask any to believe them unless he will, although I believe them all myself; but when I hear people denying the possibility of spiritual appearances—the same type of people who would deny the possibility of wireless telegraphy, unless it could be proved—I think of a day of my early years when to me there appeared someone, I know not who, in the dark shadowy glen of the sainted well, which runs

up into the hills from the Clachan of the West. I remember that my old Gaelic nurse used to speak to me much of S. Briget of the Mantle (called thus from the beautiful story of her wrapping the Holy Babe in her mantle when Mary was weak and faint), and used to croon me to sleep with a song of Briget, and would commit me to her protection. It may have been her, Briget the tender heart, the all-pitying, Briget who careth for the children of the West, Briget of the Pure Love, the Bride of Joy.

It was a cold wintry day and my little feet had wandered to the deep glen. I remember that my heart was heavy and I was full of such deep unfathomable sorrow as only children know. For my nurse had told me that morning as she dressed me that she believed the *Sidhe,* the Fairies, the *Tuatha-de-Danaan,* were dead; or at least had left this world for Tir-na-h'Oige where everything was young, for their hearts were broken because the world believed no more in them. And when she told me that I cried bitterly and went away out to gaze into S. Modan's well—for I thought that if indeed any still lived I should at least see them there.

For I had always loved to think of them in night-dreams and by day, I had tried to see them in the glint of the star-light on the waves when I should have been asleep. I thought that the bees and birds knew all their secrets, and that they dwelt in glens and woods, by soft grassy slopes, near gurgling brooks, and in dark silent tarns among the hills. And, too, my nurse had told me tales of the Fairy Cities, real in the phantasies of her Celtic mind as the kingdoms of earth. Now she said they were all dead, or had left the world.

I stayed long at the well staring into the clear still water, how long I do not know. But it was so cold that I prepared to go home. I had not seen the *Sidhe* and was very sad and felt so lonely. It must be true, I thought, and they were dead.

I rose . . . my heart gave a strange flutter. What had happened? For it was no longer winter. The trees were green with waving leaves, the wood soft with sunlight and shadow, rich carpets of purple hyacinths, green verdant moss. Through the branches, swishing in the music of a zephyr wind, I saw fair clouds,

pearl-white with violet shadows, piled up in snowy banks against a sapphire sky.

And one was standing beside me, one of beauty passing that of the children of mortality. It was a woman, radiantly lovely, her eyes like stars, her flowing raiment wrought of sunbeams and sparkling dew, about her golden hair an aureole like the glory of the heavens. She stretched forth her hands, milk-white, and when she spoke, her voice was a melody of peace.

"We are not dead," she whispered, "and shall never die in the multitude of hearts that love us." . . .

Swiftly as it came the vision passed—and once again it was cold. A chill wind moaned down the glen and the leafless branches shivered. Overhead the sky was dark and leaden, the hills bleak and bare once more.

I ran home, my heart throbbing with joy, and just a little frightened. I often think it must have been she, Briget the goddess of the deathless folk, the Queen of the unseen race.

And that night nurse said that the *Sidhe* were not really dead, she had but said so because she was cross.

If then a little child was worthy to be visited, how much more they who are fighting the great war of God?

I have ever thought that we are so apt to put bounds and limitations on the Spiritual. What after all do we know of it? Do we know why or how the world was made or how it is that all the stars are hanging in the sky? Do we know why the ocean flows obedient to the moon and how it is the seasons never fail? Why is the world full of pain and sin and misery when God made man in his own image? Why made He man at all? Do we indeed know anything of that Spirit which, like the free winds of heaven, bloweth whither it listeth, that we should presume to dictate the borders of its country?

It is only too prevalent to attempt to confine the Spiritual to the far-off places where one is accustomed to believe it hath its dwelling: but it is all so illogical to imagine the dead transported from their loves and affections and joys. In very truth death would be death indeed, and, too, the life to come would be a life of lonely

emptiness did I not firmly believe and trust that I, when I have left this mortal sphere, will yet hover continually round the ones I love to cheer, uphold, and help them on from day to day. Nor can I imagine that those who have died in Flanders and the East, are doing aught but leading on our hosts to victory . . . they and the powers of light. . . .

They are strange tales, these tales from Flanders, yet I see no reason to disbelieve them.

(4.)

I once, in mischief as a child, killed a butterfly; and in horror my nurse told me that the Gaelic writer had called the butterfly *dealan Dhé,* or the tiny flame of God. She said that the butterflies were much beloved by the angels in the gardens of everlasting bliss, and that whenever S. Mary, the Queen of heaven, walked among the unfading flowers, that the butterflies hovered about her star-crowned head, and followed in her wake.

I wonder if it is all true. For perhaps there

is immortality in birds and beasts and flowers, in music and all beauty, in the trees and the sea, in the little wind that creeps about at night-fall. I used to believe, as a child, that every flower was a soul—and it was a sweet thought, and, who knows, there may be a wealth of secret truth in the thoughts of children. They have but so recently come from the strange pre-natal world, that perhaps half-remembered realms still haunt their little hearts . . . perhaps they still hear faintly on the wind the voices of an almost forgotten world, see in the sunset the reflection of dim mystic isles, all shadowy in the uncertain past, hear floating through their dreams strange songs and queer familiar echoes, trembling beyond the veil of sense and far away. I am so glad that manuscript was discovered where Christ likened this world to a bridge, a crossing from one great life to another.

Years ago when my dog died I was stricken with grief and was only comforted when I was told the beautiful story of S. Molios, the old hermit of the caves of Arran, who, when he was about to die, thought that to the seals,

who were his only friends, he would tell the story of the white Christ. He came in the moonlight to the entrance of his cavern, and standing with the blue-green water swirling about his knees, he called the seals to him. They came, splashing through the depths, and climbing on rocks round about him, listened to his words. And as he spake their great soft eyes were filled with a wondering gladness. So while he lay adying, Molios the hermit heard the seals gambolling in the moonlit waters and crying one to another the tidings of great joy, "We, too, are of the sons of God."

How little we can understand: in the darkness our hands but grope and find nothing. We faintly hear the surging of the seas of eternity rolling around our little lives . . . and the wind that sweeps over the grasses whispers that Time is but the shadow of a dream.

(5.)

New-Year is passed again—a sad, sad New-Year. Few of us had the heart to take part in the time-honoured ritual in the Clachan of

the West, when Hogmanay faded into the birth of another landmark in time. We have a solemn ritual here, hallowed with immemorial usage. We cluster beneath the shadow of the church walls. By the bell-rope stands the beadle, in one hand a lantern, in the other a watch. One by one the villagers gather, and quietly and without speaking they shake hands and fall into their places in the silent circle grouped about the lantern. The tall trees sigh and rustle, gaunt and spectre-like against the dark sky; each bush seems magnified tenfold; each face is pale and ghostly in the flickering light. And the spirits are with us as we stand; spirits of old playmates and old friends who have been with us here and who have passed beyond the fading years of mortal life. They are close beside us now, and the old familiar faces peer at us from the darkness and smile sweet hope and wish us victory. They seem so very near us, these shades, that for a while in the stillness we forget, and the world is not so lonely after all. But the beadle has laid down the lantern; and clear and weird on the midnight air rings out

the single note of the passing bell, and every quarter minute it peals out its message of death. The old year is dying . . . dying with all its sorrows, its misery; with its harvest of lost ideals and broken resolutions; with its toll of time misspent and opportunities neglected. And the spirits whisper, "Let it die." For many of us these five minutes of the passing bell are the most solemn moments of all the circling days, for memories cluster round this gathering too vivid, too sacred to clothe in words; and as years roll on the voice of the old bell grows very yearning and its notes are sadder every year. . . .

Ah, they are past; and loudly and joyfully the bell rings out its salutation to the New-Year. Everyone shakes hands, everyone smiles. The spell is broken, and the reaction is upon us. Old jealousies and enmities are forgotten for the moment, the village squabbles are settled for a time; the laird clasps the hand of the keeper, the minister laughs loud and long with the crofter. And everyone must needs have his pull at the bell, for the ritual is not complete till then. But

after the last one has pealed out his welcome to the New-Year the spell falls again we know not how, and in silence all stand for a while gazing up at the scudding clouds and the distant stars. Then someone mutters a low "Good morning!" and one by one the villagers disperse, and their figures fade into the darkness as they go upon their homeward way. For the ancient ritual is over for another year, time and eternity have met, and the living have held communion with the dead.

New-Year is passed again—a sad, sad New-Year.

(6.)

The other Sunday for the first time since I returned home I worshipped in the sweet parish kirk in the Clachan of the West. As I expected, the congregation was sparse—for the parish is empty. At the entrance to the chancel hangs an oaken-framed roll of honour—there is another at the main gateway—and these long lists make the heart swell with pride. It has done well, this little clachan: with scarce an exception every man within its bounds is serving

with the colours. It makes one proud of one's race. God knows, there is so much in these days to be ashamed of. And when I hear of strikes and strikers, of street-corner loafers and idle slackers, when I see carelessness and indifference, selfishness and self-complacency, when I hear these miserable peace maniacs with their vapid fatuous utterances about conciliation and peace—conciliation with the ethical systems of hell and peace with the spirit of the devil—it is then that I love to go into the quiet beauty of that little country kirk and look at the big oaken frame by the chancel wall. Here at least is one spot of earth where all its manhood heard the call of duty and hearing answered it. And there is not one man in these long columns who would not far rather die in battle, than be made a party to an inconclusive and ignominious peace, which would plunge the world for generations in hopelessness and despair.

They are falling around us like the leaves in autumn, those whom we loved and who loved us in the sweet happy days gone by: and like the fallen leaves they have been swirled from our ken. The world has become grey and cold,

grown desolate and dreary—a world of empty rooms and sad echoes, whence joy has fled and love has vanished. We see a woman weeping for her only child, slain in battle; we hear the sob of lonely widows, the wail of fatherless children; we hear the cry of the earth in travail; we feel the reek and stench of war; blood runs red on the earth and the fiends of hell hold hideous revelry. . . .

There seems no light anywhere . . . our hearts are aching for love that we have lost . . . our dear ones are dead.

It is easy to talk high-souled platitudes when one has never suffered—it is very hard to act up to them when the iron of grief and sorrow has entered into the soul.

But as they were brave we will be brave too. As they made their high sacrifice with glad and willing hearts, we too, for their sake, will make ours and will not murmur. They were noble, they were true, they were great, and we—for we loved them—will try to follow in their steps.

It is because we *know* that they are not dead but that they live with greater strength and unwearied feet, with ardent love and crowned

souls—it is because we *know* this in our deepest hearts that we are able to go on. They have passed from our sight but they and their love are with us still—and we are not alone.

And when the war is over and the thin battalions come home in peace and honour, while the air resounds with the shouts of the people, the sad hearts which long for those who will come not ever again, will catch, if they hearken, wafted across the blue hills of time, an echo of that song which never hath an ending —the chant of victory of that white-robed multitude who, for God and fatherland, came through great tribulation, and therefor are now before the Throne.

(7.)

I used to love, in the short winter twilight, to sit at the door of my mud dug-out amid the filthy squalor of the S. Eloi trenches, and dream my happy dream . . . and the setting sun, glinting through the shell-holes in the battered roof of Sniper's Barn, seemed to add a tinge of hope to all my thoughts.

I dreamed of what the outcome of this war might be—a higher standard of human nature; a reconstruction of society tending not towards the foundationless formulæ of socialistic preachers but towards a grander inequality of man, for the good of man and for the strength of the State, untrammelled by envy and undisgraced by hate, where the rich would help the poor and the poor would love the rich; a Church which would cease from fratricidal strife and walk in the humility and light of its Lord; goodwill among men and peace on earth—peace wider than the whole world and deeper than the sea. . . . Such was my dream, and now wandering among the heather above the Clachan of the West, with the silver beauty of three lochs beneath me, I love to dream it still. . . .

Dreams—only dreams? . . .

And will they pass with the dawn?

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

In the hush of the twilight I commenced these pages, and now again it is evening—soft early winter evening. It is just such an hour as you used to love, Kenneth, and behind the great snow-clad mountains you knew so well the sun has swooned, radiant in crimson beauty. The little clachan, smothered in white, is very still, lulled to sleep by the low sweet gurgle of the river as it sings to the deep. A window gleams like a red eye in the virgin snow.

Shadows are lengthening . . . the last truant rays of sunset still linger on the green-blue bosom of the loch, long javelins of amber glory. And the great peaks, sad and silent, are touched with lights of rose and gold shadowed with silver grey. . . . In my heart is that strange longing, the offspring of sunset and twilight—an incommunicable yearning for I know not what.

I wonder if you are living in that vast sea of saffron space far, far beyond your Argyllshire

hills? It may not be so distant after all: for I feel you very near. . . .

Dear friend, I did not grudge you your hero's death that sunny day at Hooge—I did not grudge you your glory, dear: and if I have not always been brave in my grief as you would have had me be, remember that it is only because I am so human, so human and so weak —and it was so hard to lose you. . . .

How bright the spring-robed world looked that day—the violets, the tiny blue violets you used to gather (you and James Clark the brave, the good), the rich yellow of the mustard flower, the waving foliage of the woods, the battered beauty of the little hamlet. And I remember that the burn near where you died was clear and pellucid, and its music was so sweet.

I wonder so much about it all. . . .

And when that evening you crossed the river was James Clark waiting on the farther shore? waiting with that tender smile of his we knew and loved, to welcome you to gardens of unfading flowers and fountains of ecstatic light? I am sure he was.

And since he had to die I am glad he died

before you, for I love to think that when your work was done his hands received you to your great reward—and what a welcome that would be!

I shall not lose you for ever though I cannot feel or see you: and if sometimes because of the frailty of my nature I appear lost in the mists of doubt and uncertainty, remember that in my inner heart my faith is strong, and I know that you are happier where you are. And if I often stumble and my erring feet will go astray, ever in my soul there gleams a light, the flame your influence helped to fan and kindle, and by its help I can see you living where I can love you more and more.

We shall meet again someday, somewhere: and until that time I must journey on through rain and sun, through fog and starlight—and for your sake the road will echo with mirth and song, with brave hope and high endeavour. . . .

While you go on from strength to strength, from glory unto glory.

Night is falling, the sun has gone, and only a molten fire still glows behind the western

mountains. The lone white spirit of the eternal hills has enfolded the world in her arms and is gently hushing it to rest as a mother soothes her child. . . . Through the gathering dusk I see the chancel window of the church, its rich colours illumined by light from within, and white and pure in the midst thereof, the figure of the Crucified. Someone is playing the organ and the strains come floating on the still air, trembling and sweet . . .

Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

A star is hanging low in the northern sky . . .

Good-night, dear friend, good-night—only good-night and not farewell.

THE END.

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